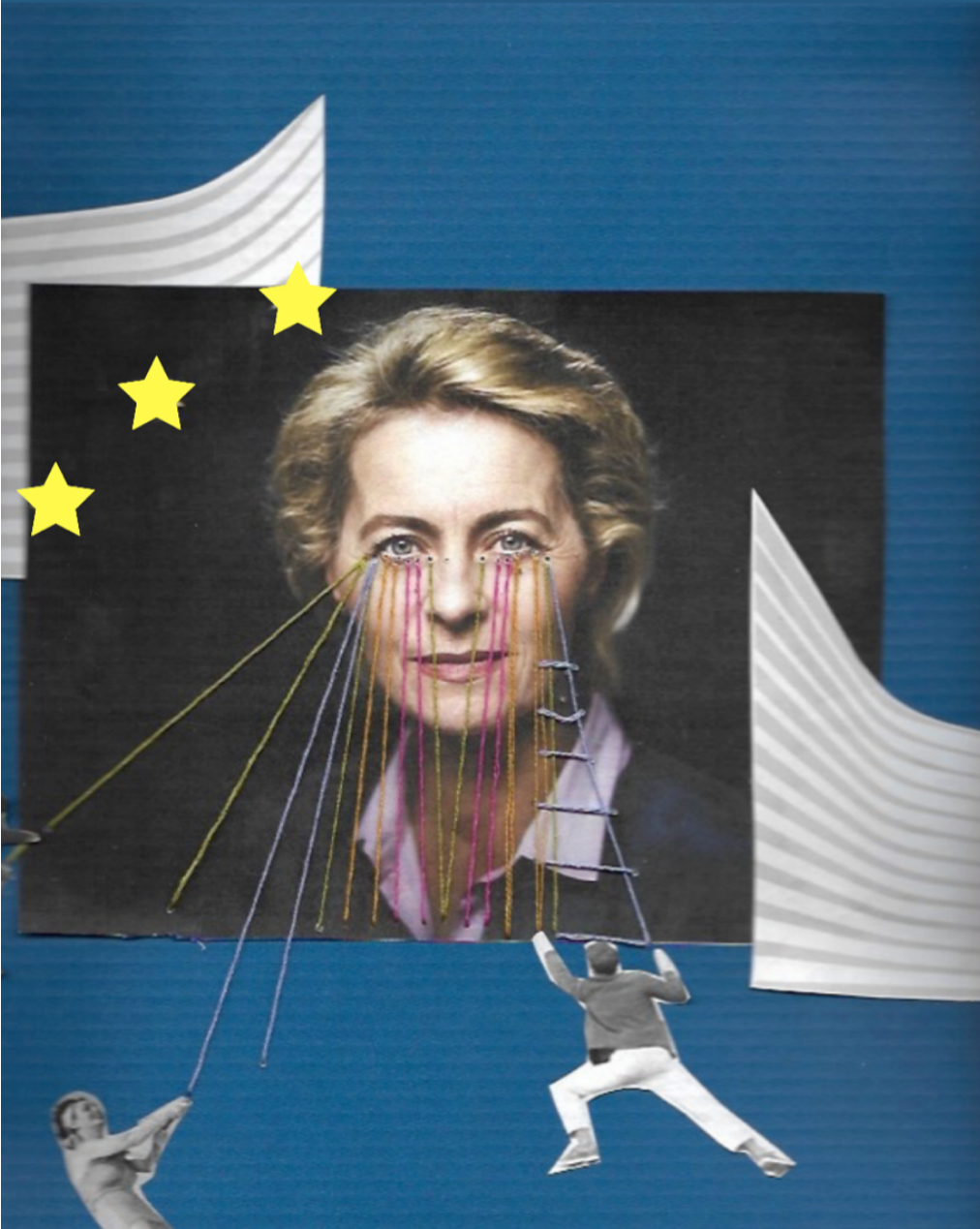


THE TIME FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

ISSUES ENTERING THE EUROPEAN
COMMISSION AGENDA



MASTER'S THESIS UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

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Abbreviations

ACF: Advocacy Coalition Framework.
CEAP: Circular Economy Action Plan
CPT: Causal Process Tracing
DG: Directorates-General European Commission
EC: European Commission
ECAP: European Clothing Action Plan
ECESP: European Circular Economy stakeholder Platform
ECI: European Citizens Initiative
EEB: European Environmental Bureau
EGD: European Green Deal
EP: European Parliament
ETP: European Technology Platform for the Future of Textiles and Clothing
EUCO: European Council
EURATEX: The European Apparel and Textile Organisation
EuRIC: European Recycling Industries' Confederation
FTA: Foreign Trade Association
GHG: Greenhouse Gas
Hebdo: Heads of Cabinet Meeting
IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISC: Inter-Service Consultation
PET: Punctuated Equilibrium Theory
MEP: Members of the European Parliament
MS: Member State
MSF: Multiple Streams Framework
SAC: Sustainable Apparel Coalition
SCAP: Sustainable Clothing Action Plan
SDG: Sustainable Development Goals
SG: Secretariat General
SME: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises/ Small Manufacturing Enterprises
STS: Sustainable Textile Strategy
TEXTRANET: Textile Transfer Network platform
UNFCCC: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
US: United States
VP: Vice President

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Foreword

At the end of my High School career, I had to work on my very first big research project comparable to the thesis I have just completed. It was a philosophical analysis of a book called: *For Europe, therefore against the EU* of the now well-known politician Thierry Baudet. Together with a classmate, I analysed and discussed the book. However, we knew little about the functioning of the European Union. Therefore, we interviewed professor Sebastiaan Princen. In the preface of the paper, we wrote: *What we want to study is a mystery for both of us, however, this research paper, filled with many themes, will certainly have an influence on the future choices we make. In other words, this paper will definitely be a source of inspiration.*

Six years later, as I am finishing my time as a student it has definitely proven to be a source of inspiration. I ended up studying Politics, Psychology, started my own sustainable fashion and styling advice bureau, and later on started the research master's in Public Administration & Organizational sciences.

And there I am, again writing a paper supervised by Sebastiaan Princen. There are three themes recurring in my life: fashion, sustainability and the EU. And all three meet in this thesis.



Acknowledgements

It was an interesting time to write a thesis during a global pandemic that caused me to experience its physical long-term effects. Therefore, I want to especially thank my first supervisor Dr. Sebastiaan Princen of the Law, Economics and Governance faculty of the Utrecht University School of Governance, for his patience, guidance and his profound feedback throughout this research process. He consistently allowed this thesis to be my own work, but guided me when needed.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor, prof.dr Markus Haverland of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology of the Erasmus School of Public Administration and Sociology, for taking the valuable time to assess this thesis and his very valuable early comments on this thesis.

I gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the research interviewees who took valuable time to take part in this thesis.

Lastly, I called myself the thesis nomad, because I have never written a paper from so many different venues since the university libraries were closed. Coincidentally, I even wrote in the study of Max Kohnstamm, one of the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community in Fenffe. In addition, I want to thank everyone that provided me with a place to study, spoket to me with supportive words and gave me warm meals: My parents, Marijke & Peter-Ton, Anna, Bella, Lute, Leo, Hanne, Roeland and Nino.

Chapter 1. Introduction



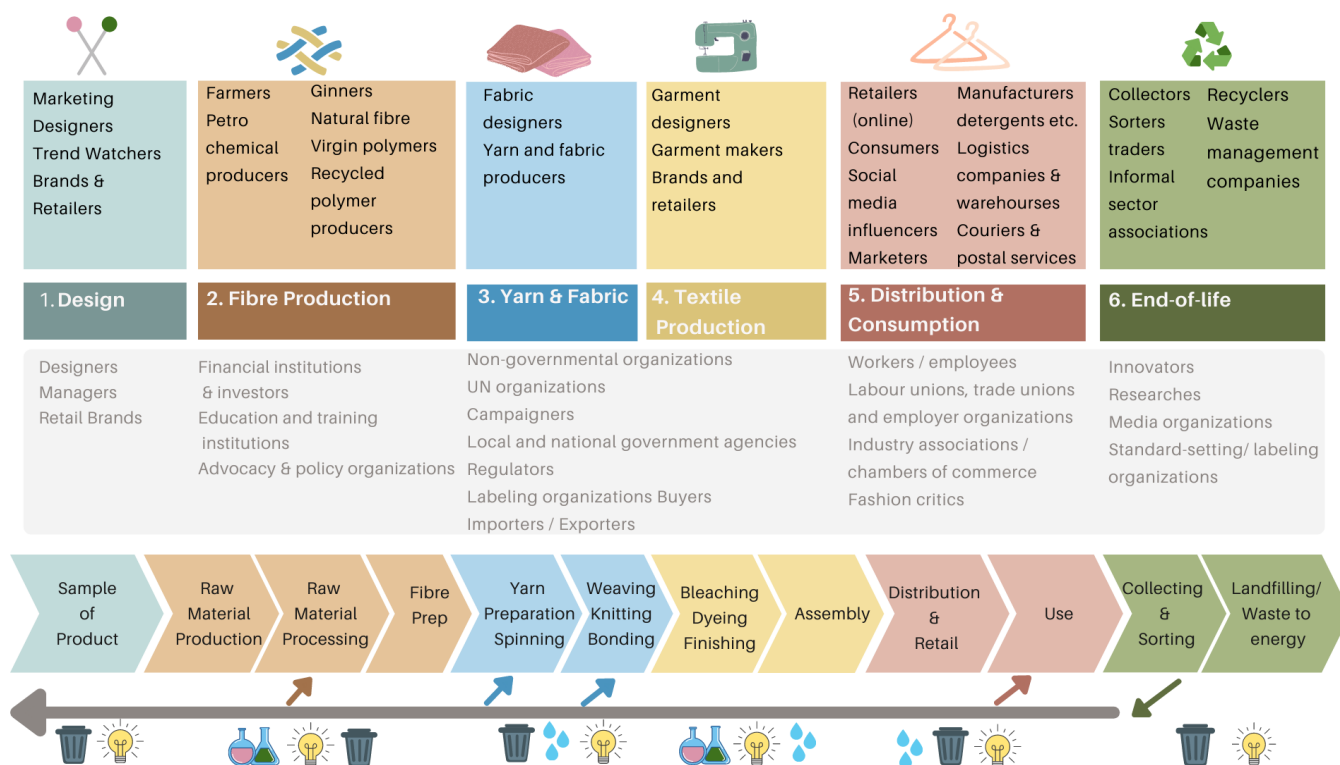
1.1 A time for sustainable textiles

The textile industry could have a crucial role in the global sustainable development agenda, and at the same time, it is one of the biggest contributors to unsustainable practices. As textiles are the fourth highest-pressure category for the use of primary raw materials and water, after food, housing, and transport, and the fifth for GHG emissions (EC, 2020). The average consumer nowadays buys one piece of clothing every 5.5 days (MacArthur, 2017; Gardetti & Torres, 2017), and in Europe, in the period 1996–2012, a 40% increase in clothing purchases was observed (Dahlbo et al., 2017).

While this sector is often solely associated with the fashion industry, it includes many other products. These are for example home furnishing, industrial textiles or filters, and hygiene products. This means that the products are used by nearly everybody daily, both individuals as well as businesses and governments. The range of activities within this industry entails the design of goods, the production of raw materials (i.e. natural as well as man-made fibers), the manufacturing of a wide variety of (semi)finished products, and the end-of-life handling of products (Stengg, 2001; Nordås, 2004). End-of-life means that a product is at the end of its lifecycle and is no

longer seen as useful by either the vendor or consumer, consequently leading to disposal or recycling. Due to its global character, the supply chain includes thousands of actors (Global Fashion Agenda & Boston Consulting Group, 2017). The yearly turnover of the sector is approximately €1.3 trillion and the sector globally employs 75 million workers (EC, 2019). Due to its extensive scope and high value, it is an important source of income and employment for many countries (Perivoliotis, 2004).

Figure 1: The extended supply chain of the clothing industry and the types of pollution involved in the process.



There is a growing consensus that the modus operandi of the fashion industry requires change, and the issue of textiles has quickly moved up the European agenda. This was clearly shown by the European Commission's adoption of a New Circular Economy Action Plan (hereafter CEAP) on the 11th of March 2020 (EC, 2020) resulting in the publication of a Roadmap for Textiles on the 21st of January 2021 (EC, 2021). The strategy aims at strengthening industrial competitiveness and innovation in the sector, boosting the EU market for sustainable and circular textiles, including the market for textile reuse, addressing fast fashion, and driving new business models (EC, 2020). The roadmap, together with comparable international and national developments, is an indication of dissatisfaction with the current way the textile industry functions. Likewise, it implies that a concern with the sustainability of

the textile sector has become an irresistible idea whose time has come sweeping over EU politics.

1.2 The EU agenda attention puzzle

However, while the Textile Strategy can be considered as the first positive case of the sustainability of textiles reaching the EU agenda, this issue did not just appear out of the blue. For this reason, I am interested in how the issue concerning sustainable textiles came into being, when EU-decision makers pay attention to such issues, and why now and not earlier? The sustainability issues are not the only pressing issues the industry is known for, seeing that human rights abuses in the sector are not understudied. The question guiding this research is: *Which processes and actors can explain how the EU strategy for Textiles was adopted on the agenda of the European Commission in 2020?*

This thesis attempts to explain why and how the issue of textiles has moved up and stayed upon the European Commission's agenda as a part of the CEAP in the specific Sustainable Textile Strategy while using Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) for agenda-setting. This MSF is adopted and adjusted to the EU setting as an analytical tool to explain the road the issue of sustainable textiles had to travel before it appeared on the CEAP. The strengths of the framework are that it emphasizes interactions of distinct parts of the agenda-setting process and pays attention to the strategies employed by different actors. Furthermore, the MSF seeks to explain occurrences in the agenda-setting process that other theories, such as the advocacy coalition framework and the punctuated equilibrium theory, fail to explain or view as abnormal.

Subsequently, this study assesses which actors are involved in this process and which issues are kept off the agenda. Specifically looking into the processes explaining why the issue of textiles was not adopted earlier, because it was not mentioned in the first CEAP. In this analysis two narratives of textile agenda-setting are investigated: the Garment Sector Initiative (only attention by EC and no plans to solve the issue) and the Circular Economy Action Plan (leading to attention and publication of plans to solve the issue).

1.3 Agenda-setting

EU policy making starts with those in power deciding which issues they find important. Therefore problems are identified that need to be solved, called agenda-setting. The traditional view of the policy cycle sees agenda-setting as the first step in the linear sequence followed by decision making, implementation, and evaluation (Hogwood, Gunn & Archibald, 1984). Critics of this linear perspective have conceptualized it as a messy and infinite cycle with feedback between the different phases (Nowlin, 2011; Sabatier, 2007). They claim that there is often not a clear starting point of when an issue reaches the agenda. In essence, agenda-setting is about how attention for problems (or lack thereof) is dispersed in a political system (Princen, 2007).

There are many definitions of 'agenda', but it generally refers to the number of issues that enjoy serious or considerable attention by decision-makers and policy makers (Cobb & Elder, 1972; Kingdon, 2003 [1984], Princen, 2015). The agenda is shaped in many ways, such as the earlier mentioned agenda-setting (getting issues on the agenda), agenda-structuring ((de)emphasizing issues already present on the agenda), and agenda-exclusion (deliberately blocking issues from reaching the agenda) (Tallberg, 2003). In this thesis, the term agenda-setting describes these three concepts. Which issues move on and off the agenda are determined in political processes, and it is helpful to think of the agenda as a continuum, made up of issues ranging from less to more attention (Princen, 2012).

In essence, "no society or political system has the institutional capacity to address all possible alternatives to all possible problems that arise at any one time" (Birkland, 2019, p. 106). Thus, the lineup of potential problems and solutions from which decision-makers select should be filtered or minimized. Multiple actors structure this list by framing issues as problems that require action (Princen, 2007). The issues that remain in the agenda waiting line are tolerable conditions not severe enough to be addressed by political actors.

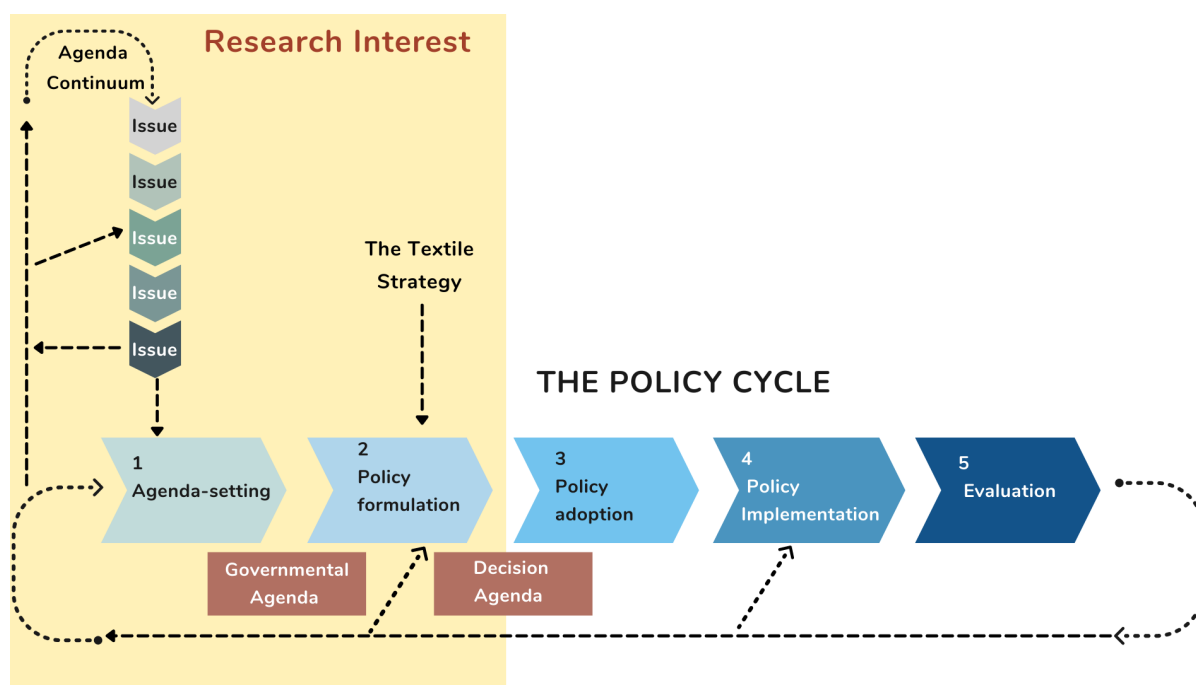
1.4 Focus on the European Commission

This thesis focuses on the process towards the adoption of sustainable textiles on the EC's governmental agenda proceeding towards the decision agenda. The issue of textiles already appeared on the EC governmental agenda earlier after Rana Plaza,

however, it did not result in high agenda-status in the issues lined up for decision-making. Therefore, I want to investigate what differed in the context of the second CEAP.

Kingdon uses these two agenda concepts to indicate that agenda-setting consists of several phases. More precisely, to show the difference between the issues discussed within and between governmental institutions (the governmental agenda) and the issues lined up for decision making in the form of policy or legislation (the decision agenda). Often issues shift between these two agendas. There is a Roadmap for Sustainable Textiles, which is used by the EC to define the scope of a textiles law or policy. However, it is not certain that such policy decisions will be taken in the future. Therefore, the governmental agenda concerns: “The subjects or problems receiving serious attention by EC officials affecting the content, form, and ambition of the Strategy for Textiles”. This means that the sustainable textile strategy is currently on the governmental and heading towards the decision agenda, which is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: *The research interest within the system of linkages between the agenda continuum, agenda-setting and the policy cycle.*



Crucial for this thesis is that the EC is the exclusive agenda-setter in legislative decision-making. Indeed, the EC chooses which issues it submits as legislative

proposals, their timing, and what the proposal looks like (Bocquillon & Dobbels, 2014). Whether the Commission's multiple treaty-based obligations¹ promoting its legislative power also increases the EC's political agenda-setting power, is up for debate (Kreppel & Oztas, 2017). However, the privilege to formulate the first legal text provides the EC with strategic advantage. The EC can propose policy alternatives adjacent to the majority in the Council and EP, whilst staying close to their own favored result (Rauh, 2021). Furthermore, the Commission can broadly navigate and shape the EU agenda, by collecting strategic information, setting up expert groups, introducing stakeholder consultations, and releasing discussion papers (Princen & Rhinard, 2006; Haverland, de Ruiter & van der Walle, 2018). If these ideas are supported by other EU institutions or if these result in requests for the EC to further develop these ideas (in the form of Communications), they become legitimized and are used to work out specific proposals (Nugent & Rhinard, 2016).

1.5 The EU's multiple agenda subsystems

However, while the EC enjoys 'the power of the pen' in introducing agenda issues and drafting policy proposals that form the foundation for the policy making process, this does not happen in isolation (Nugent & Rhinard, 2016). The policy proposals formulated by the commission frequently anticipate the agenda priorities of the co-legislators (the Council and EP) to increase the probability of proposal acceptance (Haege & Toshkov, 2011; Hodson, 2013). Both can request the Commission to initiate a specific policy proposal, but they do not have the power to introduce bills (Krebbler & Webb, 2019). While the research question focuses on the EC, many internal and external processes can affect the EC agenda. For example, there is a high probability that issues are set on the agenda 'from below' by experts working in Commission expert groups (the low politics route) (Princen & Rhinard, 2006), or 'from above' either by the other EU institutions or Commission president, or even co-existing processes.

Even within the EC, there is not one 'agenda', but a range of partly overlapping, and hierarchically organized agendas. These can influence each other, but these also have internal arrangements (Princen in Jordan & Adelle, 2020). Multiple scholars have pointed out that the internal structure of the EC is less monolithic than often portrayed (Hartlapp, Metz & Rauh, 2013; Kaczyński, Kurpas & Gron, 2008; Kassim et

¹ This includes Article 17 (2) TEU, which states that: "Union legislative acts may only be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal, except where the Treaties provide otherwise. Other acts shall be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal where the Treaties so provide" (Rauh, 2021, p. 5).

al., 2017).

Even more, there is also a relationship between the EC agenda and external interests. Since, the EC is relatively understaffed it employs non-partisan advice from stakeholder consultations or expert groups to build credibility for the issues it wants to introduce to the agenda (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2013; Haverland, de Ruiter & van der Walle, 2018; Richardson, 2006). Examples of such interest groups are: businesses, industry, academia, think tanks, NGOs and civil society organizations. These external stakeholders can form coalitions or associations involving members whose interests are aligned, and engage with the idea to influence the agenda and policy outcomes (Fitch-Roy, Fairbrass & Benson, 2020). Hence, there are many subsystems affecting the outcome of the EC agenda,

1.6 Societal and theoretical relevance

First and foremost, the textile industry is an understudied EU policy field in academic research. Therefore, this investigation enhances the understanding of the policies and decisions made at the EU level in this area. Practically, the Textile strategy is a positive case of agenda-setting, knowing that, if I can explain how and why this issue entered the EC agenda, these arguments may be relevant for many other EU-policy fields. Specifically, in the context of sustainability and climate goals, the EU as a supranational institution will become even more pressing in the future. This is because long-term solutions need large-scale and compulsory policies. Therefore, this case study is of value for actors advocating other sustainability issues in different policy fields and aiming to get these discussed at the EU level. Even though such issues are very different, their agenda and policy processes are comparable. These often require action across multiple distinct policy subsystems before these enter the European agenda.

Theoretically, this thesis is novel in seeking to address an ongoing and still evolving topic. Most EU agenda-setting literature gives an ex-post analysis of a policy decision, regulation, or directive, that has already been adopted (Herweg, 2015; Sarmiento-Mirwardt, 2013; Ackrill & Kay, 2011; Garcia, de Wolff, & Yilmaz, 2018). It contributes to a refined understanding of the process of agenda-setting with the EC agenda at the center of attention. In employing an adjusted MSF framework to the EU context in its totality, this research seeks to highlight the potential of the MSF in understanding EU agenda-setting. Apart from that, The common critiques on the

original MSF are taken into consideration in its application. Therefore, I engage in hypothesis-testing and provide necessary conditions for agenda change, to strengthen its analytical fundamentals.

Hence, this case study can potentially enrich the MSF as an agenda-setting theory and our understanding of agenda-setting processes in the EU. More systematic insights into EU agenda-setting are needed to show how agenda-setting works in a multilevel system. The EU offers great opportunities for, but also requires actors to engage with, agenda-setting and policy making at multiple levels and in multiple venues.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Part I: Theoretical & methodological chapters

The first part of this thesis explains the theoretical choices made and the concepts used when explaining agenda-setting in the original MSF and adjusted MSF. Subsequently, the application of the adjusted framework and the research design are specified. Within the following chapters, these questions will be answered:

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework & concepts

- 2.1: Considerations in choosing an agenda-setting framework:
 - *Which framework is best applicable to agenda-setting in the EU?*
- 2.2: The multiple streams framework
 - *What is the multiple streams framework?*
 - *What are the critiques on this framework and pitfalls when using it in research?*

Chapter 3: The MSF and the EC

- 3.1 : Organized anarchy and the EC
 - *How can the original US based MSF framework be translated to the EU multi-level system?*
- 3.2: Applying the adjusted framework
 - *What are the conditions for agenda change and how to test these using hypotheses?*

Chapter 4: Research design & methodology

- 4.1: Qualitative research design
 - *How is the research question approached?*

- *Why was this case selected?*
- 4.2: Data collection
 - *Which different forms of data will be used?*
 - *How is the data collected?*
- 4.3 Operationalization
 - *How are the hypotheses transformed into measurable indicators?*
 - *How is the collected data ordered?*

Part II: Results

In the second part of the thesis the case study is at the centre of attention. An overview of the processes in the EU textile sector is provided. The adjusted MSF is applied to the textile case and the hypotheses are tested. This thesis will finish with a conclusion answering the research question, evaluating the usefulness of the adjusted MSF framework in EU agenda-setting and providing alternative explanations for sustainable textiles entering the EC agenda. In the following chapters these questions will be answered:

Chapter 5: Case Study Analysis

- 5.1 Case description: an overview of the EU textile-related developments
 - *Which International and EU policies, legislation and reports affected the strategy for sustainable textiles over time?*
- 5.2 Analysis
 - *How did the issue of sustainable textiles enter the agenda continuum?*
- 5.3 Government agenda entrance: The initiative of the Garment Sector
 - *How did textiles enter the EC governmental agenda?*
 - *Why did it not maintain a position on the EC top-level agenda and reach the decision agenda?*
- 5.4 Decision agenda entrance: the second Circular Economy Action Plan
 - *How did sustainable textiles enter the EC governmental sub and top-agenda?*
 - *How did the issue move forward towards the EC decision-agenda?*

Chapter 6: Conclusion

- 6.1 Processes: fertile ground and accelerating events
 - *Which processes and events can explain the issue of sustainable textiles entering the EC agenda?*
- 6.2 Actors: active advocacy

- *Which actors can explain the issue of sustainable textiles entering the EC agenda?*
- 6.3 Discussion: The usefulness of Kingdon's theory
 - *How to evaluate the use of Kingdon's theoretical lense in explaining EU agenda-setting?*
- 6.4 Discussion: validity and methodology
 - *What were the effects of the research design and methodological choices on the validity of the research findings?*
 - *How can a researcher circumvent these in future agenda-setting research?*

Epilogue

Part I: theoretical & methodological chapters

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

For a topic, such as textiles, to reach the decision-making room of the European Commission, it has had some road to travel. It is not necessarily a long road, but certainly a messy one with many side paths. If one commission member pays attention to a topic, another member pays more attention to another matter. Every decision-maker is affected by many other individuals, the news, and sometimes by a gut feeling. This shows that agendas are bound to change and are not definitive. An issue may drift on and off of the agenda multiple times before it settles. Which makes it particularly hard to define successful agenda-setting.

This section explains the theory that is employed to answer the research question. The chapter reviews the different agenda-setting theories applicable to EU agenda-setting and explains the choice for the Multiple Streams Framework. After which, the concepts used in the original MSF by Kingdon are explained. The MSF will be used as a theoretical lens to help make sense of the complexities, ambiguities, and driving forces of multi-faceted phenomena such as agenda-setting and public policy processes.

2.1 Considerations in choosing an agenda-setting framework

There are many frameworks to use when analysing agenda-setting. However, three theories regarding the policy process seemed potentially applicable to explaining agenda-setting within the EC; the advocacy coalition framework, the punctuated equilibrium theory, and the multiple streams framework. Therefore, I will briefly explain why the MSF was eventually chosen.

The advocacy coalition framework

The advocacy coalition framework (hereafter, ACF) focuses on the policy process and was described in the works of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999). The framework aims to get a better understanding of “wicked” problems in public policy, which include goal conflicts, technical debates and require numerous (non) governmental actors (Sabatier & Weible, 2019). The groundwork is based on many assumptions, still, the most important assumption is that individuals participate in politics to transform their views into policy. These political actors organize themselves in advocacy coalitions with actors that have similar beliefs concerning a specific

problem. In line with this assumption, policy changes are driven by a combination of shifts in belief systems by learning from research and implementation, the replacement of coalition members, and the interconnections between coalitions (Hoppe & Peterse, 1993; Nohrstedt & Weible, 2010; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). These changes are likely to be followed by a transformation of governmental programs (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The framework analyzes issues that have already entered the realm of the policy cycle past the stage of agenda-setting. The issues discussed in the ACF are either in the policy evaluation phase or in the process of drafting a policy.

Research has shown how to apply the ACF to a specific EU policy area (Rietig, 2008). Since thematic DGs each represent their interests with matching elemental ideas (e.g. environmentalists versus socio-political concentrated directorates), the EC is a fundamental venue for disagreements among and between coalitions. Apart from that, strong advocacy coalitions are operating in the policy subsystem of the Green Deal and environmental policies (Sotirov & Memmler, 2012; Ydersbond, 2018).

However, his thesis aims to explain the process preceding the publication of the Strategy for Sustainable Textiles on the EC agenda. The ACF is developed to understand and explain public policy problems when belief or policy change happens within a group of actors (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Agenda-setting only has a minor role in this theory. In the textile case, the framework or policy did not change. Given these points, another model that specifically looks at how an issue reaches the agenda would better suit this research question.

The Punctuated equilibrium theory

Subsequently, the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (hereafter, PET) considers policy change as a matter of agenda-setting (Baumgartner, Jones & Mortensen, 2014). The framework states that policies often change only incrementally caused by restraints (i.e. the stiffness of institutional cultures, vested interests of political elites, and bounded rationality of individuals as decision-makers). These long periods of stability are punctuated by large sweeping events, such as changes in the frames of policies within the government or public opinion and focussing events. According to Baumgartner, Jones & Wilkerson (2011) a decisive requirement for policy change is political issue attention. Issues have to attract resources (such as time, money, expertise) before any policy changes are possible. There are venues (institutional loci), where authoritative decisions about the agenda are made. Within these venues, there

are policy subsystems that try to maintain the status quo. Therefore, agenda-setters try to move issues to the agenda most open to them (called venue-shopping).

The focus of this thesis is explaining the inclusion of textiles in the first stage of the policy cycle within the EC. However, the PET is better applicable to questions concerning why the EC is more receptive to textiles compared to other EU institutions or why the issue was raised in the EC as a venue. This question requires a comparative case study approach which is not possible for the policy subject of textiles (Lundgren, Squatrito, & Tallberg, 2018). The theory is less useful in making point-specific predictions for particular policy issues and focuses more on the stability at the system level of the EC as a whole (Baumgartner, Jones & Mortensen, 2014). It is questionable whether the PET is a universal characteristic of agenda-setting processes or a specific sort of agenda change parallel to other (gradual) changes (Green-Pedersen & Princen, 2016). This research is not interested in the frequency of punctuations and the conditions under which these arise, it is focused on the agenda-setting process behind textiles. Therefore, I will be conscious of the PET when investigating the agenda-setting process for the textile strategy. All in all, a framework that is more open to different processes seems more applicable.

The multiple streams framework

The MSF investigates which issues receive attention, how such issues are framed, and in what ways the process is politically shaped by skillful policy entrepreneurs (Acrkrill, Kay & Zahariadis, 2013). In a nutshell, the framework describes three streams that run through policy systems with their own dynamics and communities. These streams consider: problems, policy solutions and political responsiveness. There are opportunities called 'policy windows', in which these streams can be coupled by the policy entrepreneurs and the likelihood of new issues entering the agenda of policymakers increases.

While the ACF and MSF both devote attention to the effects communities of experts, personal beliefs, and political factors in explaining policy outcomes, the ACF is more applicable to the investigation of an entire policy-making process while the MSF focusses on agenda-setting. Different from the PET, the MSF can explain how shifts in attention can be dramatic, but that the agenda can only change when policymakers are influenced by longlasting and ongoing developments behind the scenes. The MSF is the only theory investigating what makes government officials attend to some issues and not to others. Since the research question focuses on the agenda setting

process and specifically on how individuals within the EC attend to an issue, the MSF was chosen as the analytical framework in this thesis.

2.2 The multiple streams framework

The MSF was written by Kingdon in 1984 and is based on the governmental system of the United States (US). Apart from that, the theory adds to the Garbage Can Model of organisational decision-making written by Cohen, March & Olsen (1972). In their viewpoint governmental systems are 'organized anarchies' and ambiguity is an essential characteristic of the decision-making process. This model was altered by Kingdon to fit the policy making process. While the earlier paragraph described the MSF in brief, this in-depth review is organized around seven key concepts to the framework. First, Kingdon's understanding of agenda-setting and different types of agendas is explained. After which the presumptions of the policy making process and organized anarchy are illustrated. Subsequently, the three streams are discussed separately. This is followed by an explanation of the opening of policy windows and the coupling of the three streams. Lastly, the role of policy entrepreneurs in the policy making process is specified.

Agenda-setting

The agenda continuum is formed by a hierarchy of subjects waiting in a queue. Some issues are standing first in line, while other issues just entered the back of the queue. Kingdon (2003) distinguishes between the governmental agenda, which are matters that receive serious attention, and the decision agenda, which are matters lined up for possible policy decisions (Bache, 2013). Within the 'attention receiving agenda subject pool', the decision process narrows the abundant set of issues to those issues to be seriously considered. After which, an authoritative choice can be made resulting in legislation or specific policy implementation.

Successful agenda-setting is a requirement for later policy making about an issue. According to Kingdon, an agenda-setting process reduces the list of conceivable subjects in any area of expertise (environment, economics, or social welfare) to those issues that are the focus of attention (2003, p. 3). When an issue does not receive the attention it is 'off' the agenda. However, reality shows that agendas are ever-changing. Issues arise and fall, and the difference between 'on' and 'off' the agenda is often ambiguous. Straightforward, agenda-setting success refers to introducing (new) issues to the agenda of policy-makers. Therefore, it is about

succeeding in pushing issues on the agenda. This phenomenon is also known as 'gaining agenda status' or 'gaining agenda access' (Princen, 2007; Cobb & Elder, 1972).

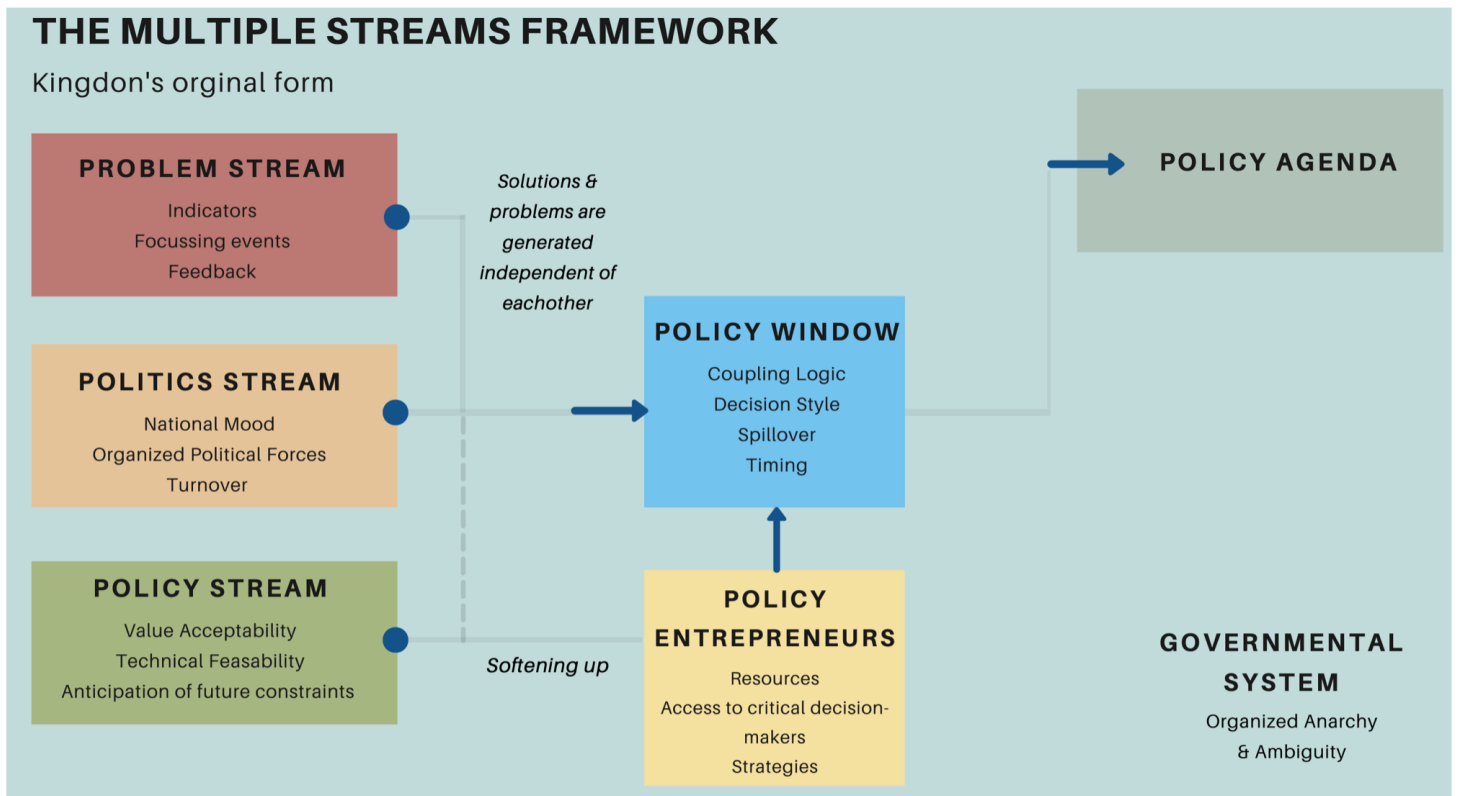
Organized anarchy

In the policy making process there is: "a state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena" (Feldman cited by Zahariadis, 2003: p. 2-30). In reality it is often a messy process, as opposed to the prevailing description of policy making as a neat linear procedure. In the latter description, policy makers recognize problems and look for ways to implement optimal solutions. Instead, governmental officials are confronted with many conflicting proposals and have imperfect information about the societal outcomes of their decisions (Zahariadis, 2008). These anarchies have three characteristics; problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation (Kingdon, 2003, p. 84).

To start, the goals or preferences of actors are unclear, because "often time constraints force [actors] to make decisions without having formulated precise preferences" (Zahariadis, 2008, p. 517). Therefore, heuristics guide decision-making and often satisficing instead of optimal outcomes are achieved. Secondly, within political systems actors have knowledge on their personal roles and responsibilities, however, rarely on the policy making process in their organization. This unclear technology leads to competition between departments concerning policy problems. Lastly, fluid participation means that there are many actors who have different tasks in the policy cycle and these often move between departments. The amount of time and devotion spent on policy areas varies over time. Consequently problems and solutions are generated independently of each other.

Despite these properties, political organizations do function and are able to address pressing problems. To further explain this organized anarchy, Kingdon describes three separate streams that are flowing through the policy system: problems, politics, and policy (Kingdon, 2003, p. 87).

Figure 3: Processes in the original MSF



The problem stream

There are always many problems governments can address, called 'conditions'. However, only a few are considered problems that require governmental action and successfully seize the attention of officials. According to Kingdon "conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them" (2003, p. 109). Therefore, Kingdon describes three triggers that transform conditions into problems: indicators, focusing events, and feedback mechanisms (Herweg, 2016). Indicators are measured and are close to objective assessment of a condition. Publications by (non) governmental agencies or academics can show such indicators and whether these have changed over the years. Data can often convince people, however, mere numbers do not speak for themselves. Therefore, the way these indicators are composed and the strategies used to persuade others of their importance is essential to those actively seeking policy change.

Focusing events (i.e. disasters, crises, accidents) can direct the attention to a problem. These can be turned into powerful symbols or appealing stories capturing ideas already in the back of administrators' minds. Some events are so disruptive and rare that they can immediately turn the heads of policymakers in one direction. These

tipping points make these conditions hard to ignore and require action. However, when the policy area is already salient and visible for a while, focusing events have little to no influence. This is because more of the same exposure to a problem can make them common.

Another way officials discover conditions is through the feedback on governmental programs or operationalization they receive. Formally, this is presented in monitoring studies or program evaluations. Informally, this is signalled in news headlines and complaints by colleagues.

The policy stream

The policy stream concerns the proposals for change. Kingdon calls this the policy (primeval) soup, in which policy solutions, strategies, or simple ideas float around for years. Some ideas are raw, and some are ready for implementation. Sometimes, new ideas enter the soup, and some have to be changed over time. All are waiting to be picked up by decision-makers. These are provided and amended by the policy community of researchers, interest group analysts, and governmental staff. The policy communities are experts in a specific policy area, and these are frequently in contact with each other on a specific topic. These ideas circulate and are actively pushed for during conferences, and meetings with officials. In essence, advocates try to create a fertile ground for linking policies and problems by revealing novel ideas to both the policy and the public community.

While the policy soup is chaotic and crowded, only a few proposals are quickly adopted, and the majority take many years of softening up. The latter, means that advocates try to influence the policy communities by getting them used to novel ideas and establishing acceptance for their policy proposals (Kingdon, 2003, p. 128). There are criteria that increase the likeliness of the survival of proposals and the selection by decision-makers. Ideas should be “worked out and ready to go” or technically feasible (Kingdon, 2003, p. 130). The content should be in line with the values of the community members. The proposed solutions should anticipate future constraints concerning the budget, the reaction of the opposition in both the mass and specialized public, and the level of receptivity of government officials. These criteria filter the big pan of soup into a little bowl of ideas up for active consideration.

The political stream

Next to shifts in problem recognition and policy receptivity in the first streams, separate transformations are happening in the political stream. Such political factors influence the responsiveness of policymakers to certain problems and the proposed solutions. This means that the political stream is a crucial supporter and preventor of high agenda status. It is affected by the national mood made up of the common public opinion and the attitudes of social movements (Kingdon, 2003, p. 148). This mood fluctuates and turns rapidly. The governmental officials sense this mood by communicating with their electorate in the form of e-mail, meetings, or personal contact. This creates the 'fertile ground' for higher agenda status for some issues, although it also restricts other issues that dissolve into relative unimportance.

Apart from that, organized political forces, interest groups, political parties, and public elites, are active in the political stream (Kingdon, 2003, p. 150). These groups either support or block the inclusion of new issues on the agenda. It is the task of political officials to grasp the level of existing (dis)agreement. Because it is an indicator of the effort and price to be paid when promoting an idea. This stream is characterized by consensus building through bargaining within and between coalitions. However, for many new ideas only turnover can create an ideological shift big enough for their acceptance (Kingdon, 2003, p. 153). There is only a small chance that incumbents with strategic positions change their priorities, and often these have established policy views blocking new ideas by advocacy groups. Therefore, electoral changes of government or changes in the composition of key personnel can bring new issues onto the agenda.

Policy windows and coupling the streams

Based on Kingdon change can only occur if these three streams are joined or coupled during a window of opportunity. In such moments there is an "opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solution or push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon, 2003, p.165). These moments occur rarely and for short periods of time. Frequently windows open because of a change in the political stream or the problem stream (Bache, 2013). When a window opens in the problem stream "decision-makers become convinced a problem is pressing" and "they reach into the policy stream for an alternative that can reasonably be seen as a solution" (Kingdon, 2003, p. 174). If a political window opens "politicians adopt a given theme for their administration or start casting about for proposals that will serve their reelection, they

reach into the policy stream for proposals” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 174). The likelihood of successful coupling increases when policy entrepreneurs such as government officials, experts, or lobbyists act as brokers (Kingdon, 2003, p. 182). They are aware that solutions generally undergo a “process of consideration, floating up, discussion, revision and trying out again” before they are picked, therefore, “advocates wait in and around government with their solutions at hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, and waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage” (Kingdon, 1984, p. 149; Cairney & Zahariadis, p. 92). They know that they have to convince and manipulate policymakers in picking their solutions.

The exploitation of these windows depends on these actors' activities. Windows close when the problem is perceived as addressed or considered unsolvable. When key figures fail to act, it reduces the willingness to invest time, effort, and money. Sometimes the events that caused the window to open, fade away from the scene or important personnel receptive to new issues change. Critical components in times of an open window include coupling logic, the arguments used to couple solutions to problems and decision style, the “amount of information needed before a decision can be made” (Zahariadis, 2008, p. 74). Another element that explains the attention on some issues by policy makers are spillover processes. Sometimes: “the appearance of a window for one subject often increases the probability that a window will open for another similar subject” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 190).

Policy entrepreneurs

Policy entrepreneurs are “advocates who are willing to invest their resources- time, energy, money- to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive or solidary benefits” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 179). They are connectors using their bargaining skills in bringing the right persons together. These entrepreneurs choose a particular frame for problems fitting the decision-maker they try to persuade using stories, indicators, and feedback. (Kingdon, 2003, p. 204). In the policy stream, they have worked out their ideas and are actively softening up the community by their presence. Their entrepreneurial success relies upon three crucial components: resources (e.g., time and money), access to critical political officials, and the strategies they adopt. Strategies consist of attempts to shape and couple the streams in the form of bargaining or the framing of communication (Jones et al., 2016). These entrepreneurs come in many forms present in different locations

(elected officials, civil servants, lobbyists, researchers, or journalists) and not one type prevails in this pool (Kingdon, 2003). Lastly, they are key players in coupling the multiple streams, since they wait patiently for windows to open and push their proposals fitting particular problems. There is a chance that topics reach the agenda when no entrepreneur is present, however, the entrepreneur makes it more likely to succeed.

2.3 Critique on MSF

This theory of agenda-setting has been criticized for being empirically driven, offering a posteriori knowledge (Bendor, Moe & Shotts, 2001), that it does not render testable hypotheses (Sabatier, 2007), and lacks understanding of why the streams were coupled (Blankenau, 2001; Brunner, 2008). These critiques are often attributed to the lack of systematic application of the MSF (Mucciaroni, 2013). Kingdon's rich and figurative language makes it hard to operationalize the earlier described concepts consistently. Its strength is that researchers can apply the framework to many different policy stages, political systems, and units of analysis distinct from Kingdon's original theory without altering the concepts to the research context (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015). This has further decreased the precision of the conceptual framework and blocks the potential causal mechanisms that the framework postulates.

Accordingly, the MSF is seen by many as a heuristic device. A common critique on the problem stream is the uncertainty about when a problem is important enough to open a policy window. Baumgartner et al. (2011) have shown that the link between the severity of the problem and the amount of government attention is weak because attention is scarce. According to Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer (2015): "the relevance of any one problem, and thus its likelihood to receive attention, is relative to the relevance of all other problems currently on the political system's agenda" (p. 437). For the political stream, it is unclear how the different agents interact and whether all three elements (national mood, organized political forces, and turnover) must be in favor of change for the stream to be ripe. These questions indicate that the broad and vague formulation of the components of each stream makes it very likely to use at least one of those to show why issues entered the agenda.

Some argue that the MSF model is specifically well-suited for studying the ambiguity, complexity, and fluidity that is an essential part of the EU policy-making and

agenda-setting process (Corbett, 2005; Cram, 2001; Richardson, 2006; Zahariadis, 2008). There is a debate between scholars who believe that the MSF is universal, which justifies its application in any state and at any time (Cairney & Jones, 2016), and others, who consider the MSF to have a universality issue. The latter, which applies the MSF to the study of EU policy-making, argues for contextualizing and adaptation of the original Kingdon model to adjust for the variations between U.S and EU systems (Ackrill & Kay, 2011). These scholars argue that agenda change in the MSF is shaped by the interplay between causal mechanisms and context (Faletti & Lynch, 2009).

In order to incorporate these critiques, this research will follow the line of the adjustments made to the MS model by Ackrill & Kay (2011), Herweg (2016) based on the initial adjustment of Zahariadis (2008). The MSF consists of a metaphorical terminology that is flexible enough to illustrate a variety of agenda-setting processes, including the EC (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016). Therefore, attention to conceptual clarity is required in this study. However, I must be cautious when employing contributions to the MSF as these often have more interest in analyzing individual cases that are investigated rather than modifying the framework or discussing the few theoretical modifications that have been put forward (Heikkila & Cairney, 2018). Another trend is highlighting one distinct part of the theory (e.g. the policy entrepreneur)(Krause, 2003; Schön-Quinlivan & Scipioni, 2017) or adding new concepts to the model (e.g. the problem broker) without paying attention to the rest of the model (Knaggård, 2015). In conclusion, the MSF lacks theoretical and operational clearance, is often not applied in its totality, and therefore much research does not succeed in contributing to its EU potential. Therefore, I will systematically incorporate these issues within my research.

Chapter 3. The MSF and the EC

Multiple scholars have used the MSF framework to analyze the EU agenda-setting process looking at issues ranging from measuring the quality of life, sugar reform and gas regulation to the climate-energy framework (Ackrill & Kay, 2011; Bache, 2013; Ackrill et al., 2013; Herweg, 2015; Rozbicka & Spohr, 2016; Fitch-Roy & Fairbrass, 2018). Still, the number of studies that apply the framework in its totality is scarce (Ackrill et al., 2013). To contribute to the MSF framework's explanatory power in the EU context, I will specify what the practical equivalents of the components in the EU are and which indicators are involved. If these are properly defined there is a possibility to formulate assumptions and detect measurement issues to help make MSF more concrete and analytically useful (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016). I will have to specifically look at the formed falsifiable hypotheses by Zahariadis, Herweg and Huß & Zohlnhöfer (Zohlnhöfer, Herweg, & Rüb, 2015).

3.1 Organized anarchy and the EU's internal structure

The EU as a system has a unique character. Therefore, when translating Kingdon's model it is important to highlight where ambiguity takes place in the European political context. Therefore, when applying the model to EU institutions this is regarded in institutional terms. In the EC, the commissioners and staff operate under time pressure and the EC faces an almost infinite number of issues that could reach the top of the agenda coming from a large stakeholder pool (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016). Yet, very few issues are considered, and the majority does not succeed.

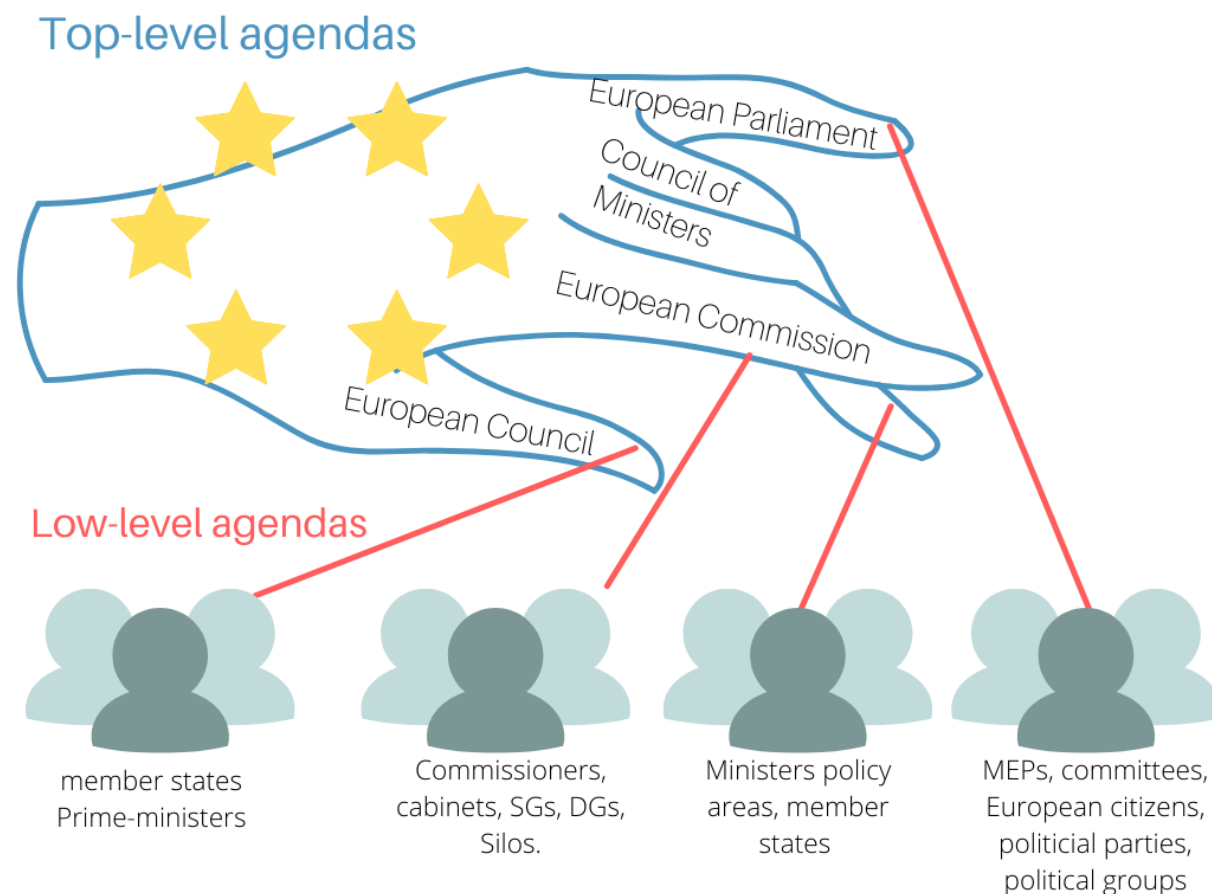
During the lengthy agenda-setting process, there is a high turnover of participants. Representatives of the textile sector and academics are involved in the early discussions about the agenda, while EC bureaucrats are more involved in the formulation of policy or strategies. The same participants do not automatically follow the same issue throughout the entire process.

The context of agenda-setting in the EU is highly complex. As a consequence actors have a demarcated view of their role and responsibilities, yet their understanding of the entire process is limited and imprecise (Ackrill, Kay & Zahariadis, 2013). Tensions may arise between departments, particularly when several institutions or DGs share a portfolio. In the case of textiles, this issue involves the policy arenas of multiple DGs. In the EU often the hierarchy of authority between DGs in demarcating cases is unclear (Ackrill & Kay, 2011).

Agenda-setting & success

The agenda in the context of multiple institutions with multi-level systems is not a straightforward matter. These different institutions have an overlapping agenda that is shared with the public, which I will call the top-level agenda. However, multiple sub-agendas exist within these different EU institutions, which I will call low-level agendas. Different DGs, silos, cabinets, EP members, committees, expert groups, and member states, have their own agendas that are tied to the top-level agenda as shown in figure 4.. These governmental sub-systems have their ideas, views, and knowledge (see Scholten, 2013). Such ideas are discussed in European as well as Member State news outlets raising the attention of policy makers. Other channels reaching policy makers are protests or marches in one or more MS showing the urgency of an issue. Apart from that, the EC executes multiple policies, strategies, and funded programs that are evaluated by EU bureaucrats and outsiders resulting in monitoring studies. In the EU context, it is of great importance for those active in the problem stream to show why a problem requires supranational and communal action because much depends on the biases and interests of the audience (Jones et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2014).

Figure 4: An overview of how the different low-level agendas connect to top-level



The EU policy stream

According to Zahariadis (2008), this group consists of officials, academics, think tanks, and other researchers. Compared to the original MSF, there is more heterogeneity in European policy communities. To illustrate, this community is composed of members in 27 different states and is influenced by transnational politics. Thus, the palette of policies presented and discussed within the community is diverse, and consensus over values is harder to reach.

Therefore, Herweg suggests minimizing Kingdon's criteria for the survival of policy ideas in the policy primeval soup, and only uses technical feasibility as a criterion for policy survival. However, it is not theoretically sound to remove the other criteria before empirical investigation. There is a chance that there is cooperation within policy communities leading to comprehensive policy proposals. Proposals that anticipate future constraints in the EC in the process of lobbying are more likely to survive than those proposals that do not meet these standards.

The EU political stream

The political stream demands the most significant changes, considering it encompasses the government, parliament, interest groups, and the national mood, whose practical equivalents for the EU are rarely defined (Herweg, 2016).

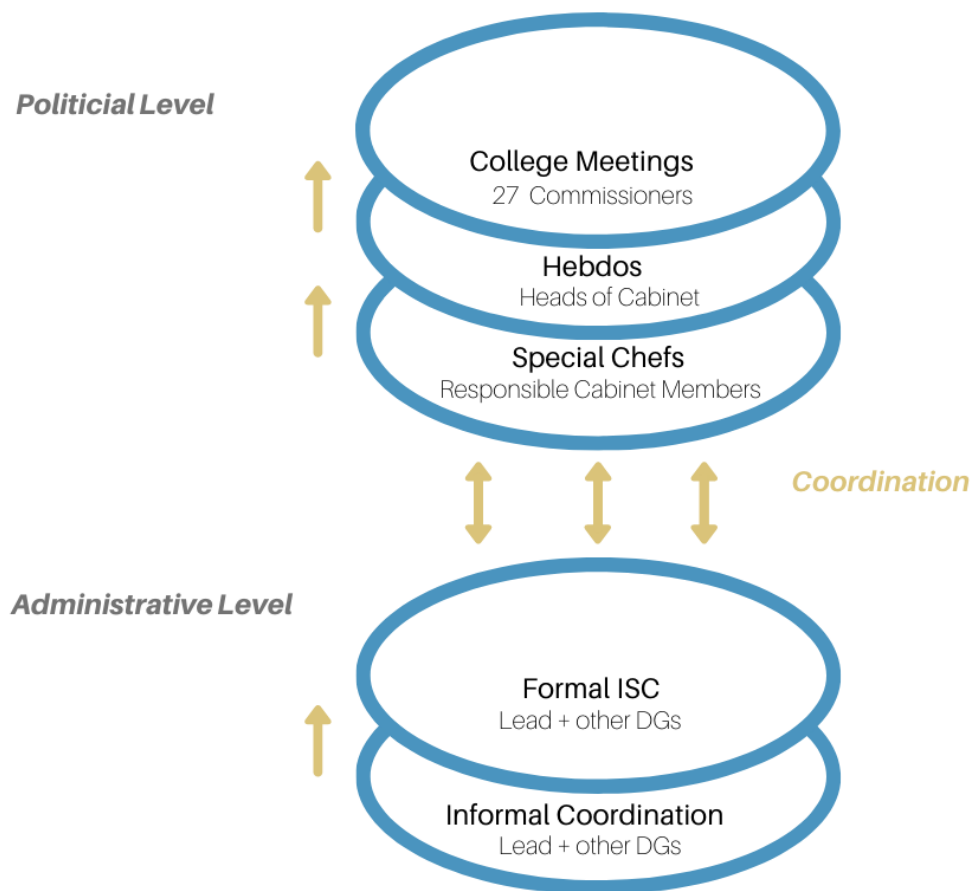
Government

The executive branch of the EU includes the Commission, the Council of the EU, and the European Council. To analyze the European Commission's agenda-setting power, it has to be acknowledged as a governmental body. Comparable to national governments the EC consists of an executive branch (Commissioners and their staff) responsible for policy initiation and formulation resulting in legislative, budget or program proposals. Additionally there is an administrative branch (departments and services), providing capacity and expertise crucial for the EC to set-up and draft policy proposals, together with the monitoring of implementation (Cini & Borragán, 2015).

Besides this vertical differentiation, there are substantial horizontal differentiations between the sectoral Directorates-General (DGs) that form the organization of the Commission services (Hartlapp et al., 2012; Hartlapp et al., 2014). These thematic

departments make policy for a specific area sectorally (e.g. DG environment or DG agriculture) or functionally (e.g. DG budget). The agendas of the different DGs may differ and these departments are very close to national ministries. Several research findings point out that collaboration between DGs is characterized by inefficient meetings and fear of loss of administrative turf (Eppink 2007; Hartlapp et al., 2014). The relation between and layers within these different levels is shown in figure 5.

Figure 5: Coordinative steps in strategy and position formation inside the EC (Hartlapp et al., p. 429).²



Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) is equivalent to the national parliament, and the only directly elected EU body. Informally, the EP can introduce news topics into the political conversation and acquire priority over other competing issues by using its

² ISC= Interservice consultations

capacity to adopt 'own initiative' reports (Rasch & Tsebelis, 2013; Kreppel & Web, 2019). These reports can serve as 'attention attractors' to show the preferences and priorities of the EP. However, these reports do not necessarily lead to policy proposals and are most effective when EP and the EC interests overlap (Kreppel & Webb, 2019). There is a possibility the EP successfully initiates a discussion on a new topic (Maurer & Wolf, 2018). Apart from that, MEPs can engage in cross-party initiatives to stimulate conversations about specific subjects.

Partisan & national affiliation

The EC operates within a context in which other institutions are more visibly governed by partisan- and national affiliations (e.g. the EP). However, this framework does not exclude these affiliations. Research has shown that Commissioners' position-taking and friction in internal decision-making follow a national and, to a lesser extent, sectoral pattern (Wonka, 2008). In earlier studies, national and partisan affiliations were fundamental in forming Commission administrators' attitudes, because these administrators come from a broad range of political parties and professional backgrounds (Hooghe, 2005). Apart from that, the EC is frequently described as guided by pro-competitive ideas about completing the single market (Fligstein, 2001; Herweg, 2017). At the administrative level, each DG has a different mandate with a variety in width and specificity. Altogether, all the inside and outside processes affecting the EC create many interactions and opportunities for conflict (Hartlapp, 2007; Hartlapp, Metz & Rauh, 2014).

Interest groups

Many interest groups exist at the European level. However, their influence on the European agenda is up for debate. Rozbicka & Spohr (2015), and Fitch-Roy & Fairbrass (2018) point to the power of interest groups on agenda formulation when organized in networks. These can persuade decision-makers through framing information and reduce the effect of time scarcity (Zahardiadis, 2014). While some show that the influence varies considerably across different interest groups (Dür & Bièvre, 2008), others show that it is an underexplored topic of research (Klüver, 2013). This complicates the translation of Kingdon's interest groups to the EU agenda-setting context. The EC requires policy-relevant information to gain citizen support and endorsement of powerful economic actors. It relies on interest groups also because they deal with multiple issues and are understaffed (Bouwen, 2009; Majone, 1996). Interest group input is of influence because the Commission and its

DGs are open to interest groups when discussing policy proposals (Klüver, Mahoney, & Opper, 2015; Mazey & Richardson, 2006). In line with Herweg (2016), I have concluded that interest groups are important and require more attention in the three EU streams. However, which specific interest groups and on what basis succeed in getting a topic on the agenda, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

National mood

In the same vein, the national mood requires adaptation. For the European mood to emerge, an overarching communicative space between citizens and EU politicians that functions as a European public sphere would facilitate this process (Eriksen, 2005; Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Within the scientific community, there is no consensus on its existence and purpose yet. Therefore, it is discussed as a hypothetical concept within the scientific community (Rivas-de-Roca & García-Gordillo, 2021).

However, I believe that a European zeitgeist influences the receptivity of the Commission to issues. This mood is translated into the media and communicated by journalists acting as intermediaries (Guo & McCombs, 2015). The increased role of social media has become a new space for public conversation (Shah, 2016). For example, there is a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) installed in 2012 to give EU citizens a feedback opportunity, but it is still at an early stage. Since 1973 there has been an opinion poll called the Eurobarometer and DG's can request specialized surveys. However, there is a large variety in its usage between DG's (Haverland et al., 2018). However, EU news is scarcely mentioned in the national media limiting possible public opinion, and it is not certain that all European citizens are potential members of this sphere because of low interests (Baisnée, 2007). Therefore, I do include the European mood in the framework, in the form of a digital (Eurobarometer and ECI) and media sphere in which citizens can share their opinions.

Turnover

Thirdly, turnover also plays a role in deciding the political priorities since a newly-elected Commission President seeks to play the role of 'new broom' (Zahariadis, 2007). The President decides on the internal organisation of the

Commission to ensure that it acts consistently, efficiently and based on collegiality³. Some claim that there is no such thing as collegiality in the EC, since vertical and horizontal tensions exist. However, between 2004-2014 presidential reforms took place to tackle the internal fragmentation, such as the adoption of priority projects, the appointment of seven vice presidents (VPs) of the Commission, each responsible for coordinating a team of their fellow commissioners, and an expansion of the role of the SG in coordinating the DGs (Brooks & Bürgin, 2020; Kassim et al., 2013).

Table 1: *The Political Stream in the EU*

<i>The Political Stream in original MSF</i>	<i>Functional equivalents in the EU</i>	<i>Importance during</i>	
		<i>Agenda-setting</i>	<i>Decision-making</i>
Government	European Commission	High	High
	Council of Ministers	Medium	High
	European Council	High	Low
Parliament	European Parliament	Medium	High
Interest Groups	Domestic interest groups & European representative bodies	Low	Medium
National mood	European Mood	High	Low

Source: Herweg, 2015, p. 45 & p. 48.

Policy windows & coupling the streams

Herweg (2016) makes a distinction between the agenda and the decision coupling process different from Kingdon. The agenda coupling process results in a worked-out proposal having a more active status on the governmental agenda (Kingdon, 2003). These will be called the 'agenda windows', and are opened by changes in the problem or political streams. However, all three streams are of critical importance. The chances that a new topic is adopted for a longer period on the agenda while there is no availability of possible policy solutions are low. However, it is possible. The

³ The principle of collegiality, which governs all of the Commission's work, indicates that all Members are equal when participating in the decision-making process and are collectively responsible for all the Commission decisions and actions are taken (European Commission, 2020b).

decision coupling process involves the political battle over what is included in the final policy proposal. These will be referred to as the 'decision windows'. I will focus on agenda coupling and the agenda process because the decision agenda is beyond the scope of this research as the battle over the final proposal of the sustainable textile strategy is currently taking place.

When speaking of 'agenda windows', which in this thesis would imply a possibility of agenda change or reform, Kingdon emphasizes 'quick movement' (Kingdon, 2003). The window in one stream opens windows in the other streams, but these can close quickly. The political window opens for example in times of Commission turnover when a new president and elected Commissioners set out the new political guidelines for the entire Commission for the next 5 years, while the annual publication of strategies and programs also opens up policy windows. Likewise, Kingdon describes how parliamentary elections open policy windows. The EP has an indirect right to the legislative initiative (Article 225 TFEU) that enables it to request the Commission to submit a proposal. However, it is unlikely that this is exploited differently when the composition is altered through elections compared to a normal legislative period (Herweg, 2016). This right to the legislative initiative can grasp the attention of the Commission at any time as well as when the EP demands the Commission to collect more information about an issue.

The coupling of the solutions to problems without a receptive EC climate, and the coupling of urgent problems to political will without ready-to-use proposals, are possible. However, for issues to have a firm place on the agenda the three streams must be coupled. This is difficult at the European level because of the opaque agenda-setting process. Policy entrepreneurs have a crucial role in pushing and selling their policy solutions to their definition of problems. This is when the three streams come together, providing the greatest opportunity for change.

When following Kingdon's argumentation, spillovers can serve as examples, influencing future decisions in other policy areas. Ackrill & Kay (2011) call this an exogenous spillover, when in the EC policy issues apply to multiple different policy arenas (i.e. the assigned responsibilities of different DGs). This has an effect on the type of spillover occurring, since it can impact closely but institutionally separate policy areas. For example the rules on free trade can have an effect on the specific subject of textiles. Apart from that, if a policy concerns a variety of related policy arenas, a decision made in one arena might affect the policy agenda in other areas,

likely demanding a decision which would not have been made under different circumstances (Ackrill & Kay, 2011). These are called endogenous spillovers. For example when DG ENV makes a decision on waste legislation for plastics this can increase the pressure of reform in different but connected policy areas. I will use both terms in the MSF adjustment to the EU.

Policy entrepreneurs versus actors

Kingdon's definition of policy entrepreneurs remains vague: "no single formal position or even informal place has a monopoly on them" (2003, p. 180). They are officials, interest groups, and research organizations located in and out of government. This formulation separates the policy entrepreneurs as dynamic actors actively selling ideas, from passive policy makers. The selection of issues is a dual process in which policy makers have to choose a policy advocated by policy entrepreneurs fitting the policy problem.

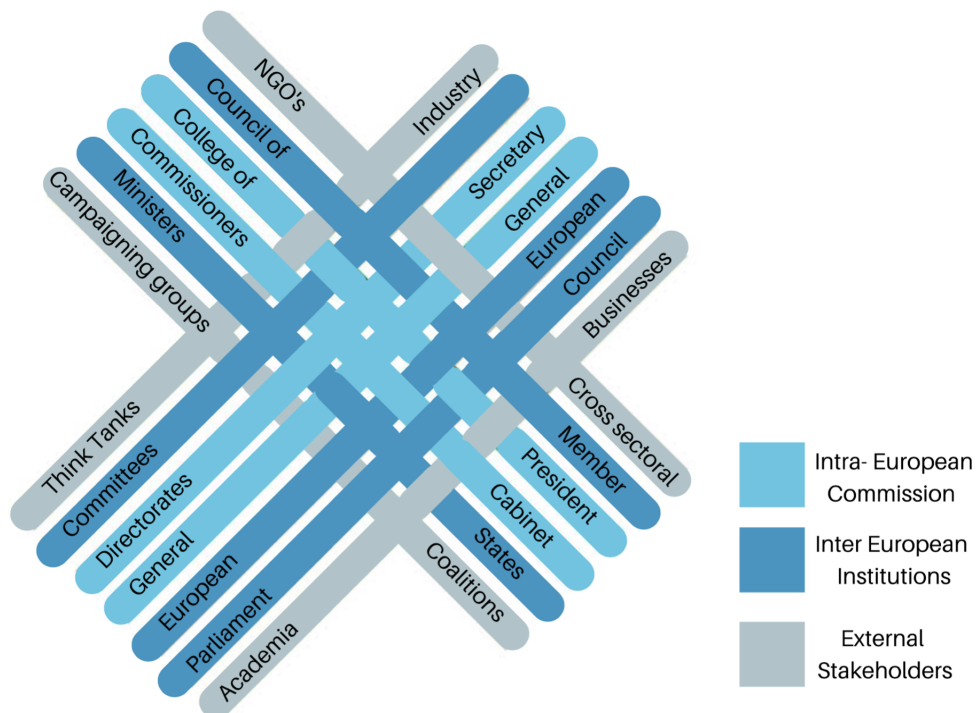
However, the distinction between actors inherent to any agenda-setting and policy making process remains imprecise. Issues and policy solutions always require discussion or validation to be taken up. In the theories of Herweg (2016), Ackrill & Kay (2011), and Kingdon(2003) it is not clear how big the role of entrepreneurs is in coupling the streams and how these differ from average players in the political game. The role of advocacy groups is to actively sell ideas, and the role of policy makers is to actively select ideas. That is inherent to their jobs and does not make them renowned policy entrepreneurs.

The standard actors are reactive, while the policy entrepreneur or political entrepreneur is proactive. These engage in extra activities on top of what is described in their job description. Therefore in this analysis policy entrepreneurs are defined as individuals outside of the EU that cause publicity by pro-actively and consciously supporting an issue. These entrepreneurs may be part of industry associations, NGO's or think tanks. I will use the term political entrepreneurs for those who hold (elected) positions in EU institutions. These entrepreneurs are politicians, officials, bureaucrats that try to get attention for an issue. Both types of entrepreneurs often lead by example, use a wide range of contacts in and outside of government, and know how to frame one chosen problem plus its solutions. In this manner, they can couple the streams and use windows of opportunity.

As shown in the adjusted framework, many potential actors are influencing the agenda-setting process of the EC. I use the term potential to indicate that some of the knowledge about the actual influence in the agenda-setting process of textiles cannot be distilled from the literature and will possibly follow from the analysis. Therefore, these actors serve as generic starting points. These actors are divided into three categories: Intra-institutional European Commission actors, European Inter-institutional actors, and extra-institutional stakeholders. All actors are summarized in the form of a Te Whāriki which means “woven mat” in Maori in Figure 6. The multiplicity of actors active in the agenda-setting process, their (in)formal connections and the way they navigate is reminiscent of fabric. In which the Commission forms the center of influence.

Figure 6:

The different actors possibly involved in the European Commission agenda-setting process.

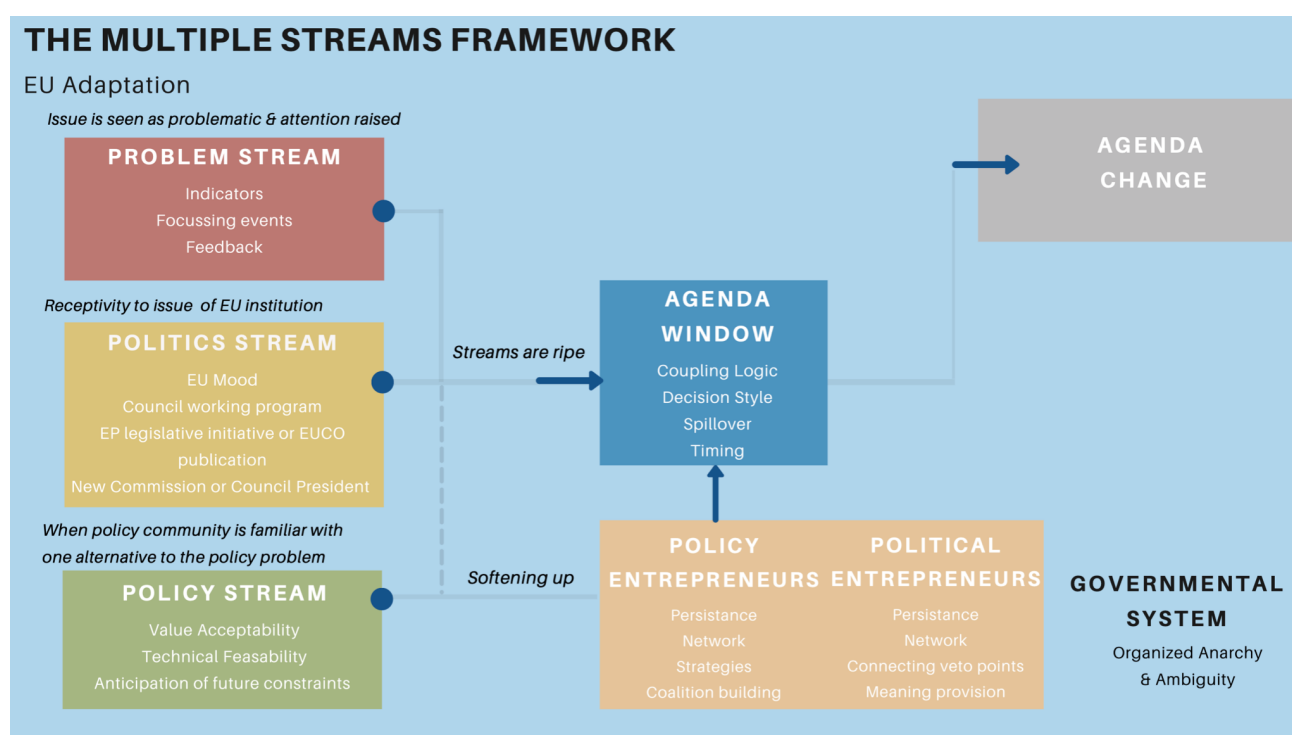


3.2 Applying the adjusted framework: conditions and hypotheses

The preceding passages focussed on adjusting the MSF to analyze agenda-setting in the EU. As earlier mentioned, the positivist critique on the MSF is that it is empirically driven, incoherent in the application, and does not provide testable hypotheses. Multiple scholars have tried to find solutions to this problem by employing causal conditions, and propositions (Capano 2012, p. 458; Copeland & James, 2014). However, these are broad and case-study specific. In general, the number of studies using hypothesis testing is rare, and these often examine different parts and use distinct methods, which does not provide coherence in the accumulated knowledge or adds to the value of MSF as an analytical framework (Cairney & Jones, 2016).

Herweg (2017) developed falsifiable hypotheses that guide the empirical study of agenda and policy change. She begins with the formulation of necessary conditions for agenda change, the opening of agenda windows, agenda coupling, and decision coupling (p. 59). This results in 11 hypotheses specified to the EU (Herweg, 2017, pp. 52-59). Subsequently, Herweg, Zahariadis & Zohlnhöfer (2018) have come up with a similar set of hypotheses (p. 30). I have chosen to amend Herweg's hypotheses (2017) since my understanding of 'activators' and policy and political entrepreneurs differs from both papers. I will provide definitions of the concepts mentioned in these processes and the multiple routes. It must be noted that my hypotheses follow the line of Herweg (2017), because this thesis aims to contribute to the strengthening of the MSF framework (pp. 52-60).

Figure 7: Processes in the adapted MSF



Conditions for agenda change

I will now present the necessary conditions increasing the likelihood of agenda change. The probability of agenda change in the EC increases if:

C1: The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe.

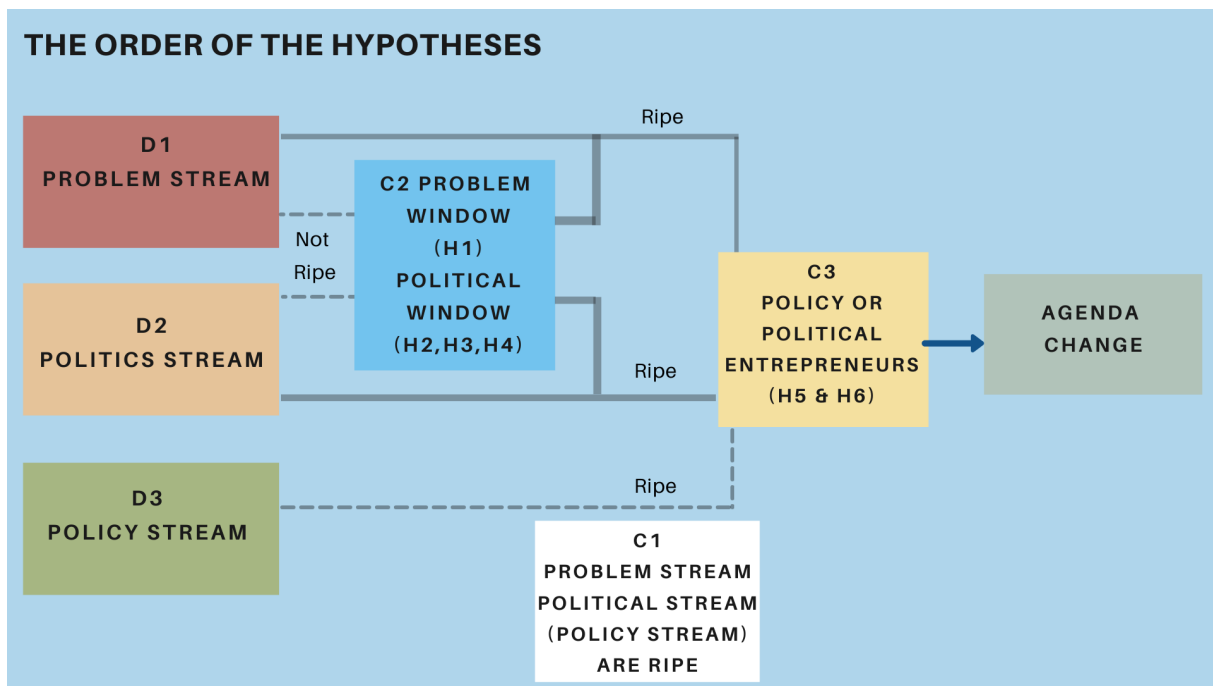
C2: A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window.

C3: A policy entrepreneur or political entrepreneur engages in coupling the three streams.

According to Herweg all three conditions must be met for agenda change to be probable. However, I do not consider policy stream ripeness an ex-ante condition for agenda change to occur. Because I think that there is time after recognizing an issue on the EC agenda to couple the policy stream or search for policy solutions leading to its ripeness. Apart from that the order of the necessary condition 1 and 2 varies, this is shown in Figure 8. Sometimes the streams are ripe before an agenda window opens and sometimes these are ripened by agenda windows. Necessary condition 3 can only happen after condition 1 and 2 are met.

Since the aim of this thesis is to add to and improve the MSF theory, each condition is empirically investigated in the analysis. Nevertheless, prior to testing these, they require a transformation from Kingdon's metaphorical language to falsifiable hypotheses. Therefore, I will explain the definition of what constitutes stream ripeness to afterward illustrate explicit hypotheses as regards the occurrence of agenda windows, as what policy and political entrepreneurs are and the coupling of the streams.

Figure 8: *The order of the hypotheses*



C1: Definitions of stream ripeness

Concerning all streams, ripeness implies that coupling becomes possible. Stream ripeness can coincide or happen independently for a long period of time. As a result of the earlier section, I introduce the following definitions of stream ripeness:

D1: The problem stream is ripe if (1) attention to an issue relevant for the policy field in question is raised in which the EU-government is held responsible for correcting the discrepancy and (2) that issue is interpreted as being problematic to society's values, ideals, or expectations by individuals in and around government.

D2: The political stream is ripe if at least one governmental EU institution is (partly) receptive to a specific issue.

D3: The policy stream is ripe if the policy community is familiar with at least one alternative to the policy problem in question, that is either (1) technically feasible, (2) acceptable to the values of the community, or (3) anticipates future constraints and (4) are discussed by the policy community.

The first definition by Herweg had a rather broad understanding of issues being

interpreted as problematic. I think it is important to note that while there is a chance that there are EU-officials taking part in the problem interpretation, this definition does not overlap with the political stream ripeness. This is because some issues can be seen as problematic for a while by multiple individuals or society as a whole, irrespective of a big group of actors within European institutions discussing these in formal meetings. Apart from that, I do not consider the problem stream ripe if a problem is not perceived as requiring supranational EU actions. This translation is key for the problem stream to become ripe, otherwise these problems remain mere conditions or MS issues.

In the original MSF, the stream is ripe when the government indicates to be receptive to an issue (Kingdon, 2003), however, the three EU institutions that make up the government possibly have different and partly conflicting agendas (Princen, 2015). In most of the papers discussing Kingdon (including Herweg), receptivity is seen as a given and is not defined. This makes it hard to pinpoint what receptivity is. Therefore, I connect receptivity to the earlier description of the agenda as a continuum. Receptivity is: signals of the issue entering the agendas of lower actors or subsystems. However, it did not result in agenda setting at the top level. For definition two it suffices that at least one and possibly more EU institutions are discussing a topic. Therefore, not all institutions have to be susceptible to an issue. For example only the EC sub-departments and staff suffices. The definition states partly because internally there is a chance that sub-departments are discussing this topic, showing an issue is discussed, however, there is no public appearance on the governmental agenda.

C2: The opening of windows

There are many different routes towards the opening of an agenda window. I will show which routes I hypothesize to be possible:

H1: *An agenda window opens in the problem stream if; a) a relevant indicator deteriorates; b) a monitoring study points to a discrepancy between a program's goal and the program's effects; or c) a focusing event relevant to the policy field in question occurs.*

In the EU agenda-setting process, the Commission is the institution of most importance due to its agenda-setting and legislative competencies. I will start with the Commission's role in the stream. In the case of Commission turnover, an agenda window opens irrespective of the reasons for this turnover, such as elections or

resignations. Apart from that, these windows open when the presidential program is launched. However, contrary to Herweg I decided to remove working programs from this route, because I believe that if an issue has been mentioned in such publications it has already reached the agenda. It opens up a window for further discussion into a decision window, however not an agenda window. Earlier the ambiguity of this institution and the overlap of issues between DG's was described (Ackrill & Kay, 2011). For that reason, the Commission is seen as a homogeneous actor when the college of Commissioners has committed itself to a policy. Due to the principle of collegiality it is highly unlikely that commissioners will work against each other. Therefore, in line with Herweg (2016), the political stream is regarded as ripe if the Commission supports an issue. To conclude, I hypothesize:

H2: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Commission takes office; or b) In case there is an EU mood regarding a problem that reaches the Commission.*

I assume in line with Herweg that turnover of the Council caused by national elections does not open an agenda window. The substitution of a national minister will not substantially affect the chances that an issue enters the agenda or that a decision is made by qualified majority voting. However, if the political affiliation of the majority of the council changes a window can open (Herweg, 2017). Though, this is beyond the scope of this EC-centered investigation. Still, a replacement of the Council presidency can open an agenda window. The president has the power to decide the structure of the agenda and exclude issues from the agenda (Bocquillon & Dobbels, 2014; Tallberg, 2004). Therefore, I hypothesize that:

H3: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Council Presidency takes office; or b) one or consecutive Council Presidencies release their working program(s).*

H4: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if the European Council publishes conclusions that provide an impetus for the EU's development.*

In Kingdon's original theory parliamentary elections open agenda windows. In the EP, coalitions are usually formed for specific purposes or issues (Decker & Sonnicksen, 2011; Herweg, 2017). This means that a change in the EP's composition does not increase the likelihood of MEPs to increasingly or differently use the indirect right to legislative initiative than in times of the regular legislative period. However, these initiatives are ways to request the commission to focus on an issue. Therefore, for both

the Council and the EP I hypothesize:

H5: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if (at least) one branch of the EU's executive or legislative asks one (other branch of the EU's executive to address an issue.*

It is important to define when an agenda is considered to be open, because in the EU there are multiple opportunities for windows to open. In Kingdon's theory windows open very shortly. Taking into account the EU multi-level system, there are more forces that open agenda windows, these appear more frequently, and need more time to spread to other institutions. Thus, agenda windows do not necessarily close quickly at the EU top level. Alternatively, I suggest in line with Herweg that an agenda window is considered to be open as long as an issue persists to be at the center of governmental attention. This happens when the issue is mentioned on EC and Council meetings' agendas. On that account, I specify:

D4: *The overall EU agenda window remains open as long as an issue stays on the governmental agenda.*

However, as mentioned in chapter 3.1, the EU is a multilevel system. Therefore, when focusing on the EC top-agenda, this conforms to Kingdon's original concept of windows of opportunity. I define:

D5: *The EC agenda window remains open for a short period of time.*

C3: How policy and political entrepreneurs couple the streams

If the streams are ripe, combined with an agenda window of opportunity, there is a high chance for agenda change if the policy or political entrepreneurs engage in the coupling of the streams. However, to be clear I define:

D6: *Policy entrepreneurs:*

- a) are proactive agents
- b) engage in advocacy activities beyond their job descriptions
- c) consciously support a particular issue
- d) are individuals outside of EU-institutions

D7: *Political entrepreneurs*

- a) are proactive agents
- b) engage in advocacy activities beyond their job descriptions

- c) consciously support a particular issue
- d) hold (elected) positions in EU institutions

For agenda change to occur in the EU the size and length of a window is of lesser importance, it depends on ripeness of the streams and the skills of the policy and political entrepreneurs in coupling the streams. Whether both types of entrepreneurs succeed in coupling the streams depends on their personal capabilities (such as perseverance and negotiating skills) and network (of key figures) (Herweg, 2017). Some personal skills are difficult to assess empirically without having direct contact with these entrepreneurs, thus I focus on those that are much more straightforward to examine. So, I hypothesize:

H6: *A policy entrepreneur couples the streams.*

H7: *A political entrepreneur couples the streams.*

In line with the scope of this research I chose to amend the hypotheses concerning policy or political entrepreneurs only focussing on coupling instead of focussing on which characteristics of entrepreneurs increase the likelihood of coupling.

Table 2: *The MSF necessary conditions and hypotheses for agenda change*

Necessary Conditions: The likelihood of an agenda change increases if	
C1	The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe.
C2	A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window.
C3	A policy entrepreneur or political entrepreneur succeeds in coupling the three streams.
Specifying C2: Multiple routes towards the opening of an agenda window	
H1	An agenda window opens in the problem stream if <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) a relevant indicator deteriorates; b) a monitoring study points to a discrepancy between a program's goal and the program's effects; or c) a focusing event relevant to the policy field in question occurs.
H2	An agenda window opens in the political stream if <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) a new Commission takes office; or b) In case there is an EU mood regarding a problem that reaches the Commission.
H3	An agenda window opens in the political stream if <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) a new Council Presidency takes office; or b) one or consecutive Council Presidencies release their working program(s)
H4	An agenda window opens in the political stream if the European Council publishes acts that provide an impetus for the EU's development.
H5	An agenda window opens in the political stream if (at least) one branch of the EU's executive or legislative asks one (other branch of the EU's executive to address an issue.
Specifying C3: Agenda coupling	
H6	The policy entrepreneur couples the streams
H7	The political entrepreneur couples the streams.

Chapter 4. Research design & methodology

Now that I have explained the adjusted MSF framework to the EU, and the derived hypotheses to test, this section will discuss the method and research design. In this chapter, I will describe the practicalities of designing and executing the research. To analyze the research question: *Which processes and actors can explain how the EU strategy for textiles was adopted on the agenda of the European Commission?*

4.1 Qualitative research design

This thesis engages in qualitative research, testing hypotheses and employing a case study approach in its examination. These three features are closely connected and are described in the following sections. I want to highlight that the goal of this thesis is to add to the theoretical and practical knowledge of agenda-setting processes in the EU. The theoretical insights will be gathered concerning the agenda-setting processes in the European Union while collecting empirical data for the Sustainable Textile Strategy case. Since the number of studies engaging in hypothesis-testing when applying the MSF framework and the investigation of EU agenda-setting is limited, a qualitative over a quantitative design was chosen. The strength of qualitative research is that it promotes an in-depth understanding of the nature and complexity of phenomena (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012) and enables investigating new areas of research (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead, 1987).

Epistemology and ontology: critical realism

The foundation of any research design and methodology is interconnected with the philosophy of science of the researcher. Now that I have almost finished my research master's in Public Administration and Social sciences, I find it important to specify to the reader what my view on scientific knowledge is. When looking at the hypotheses formulated in the earlier chapter, it might seem a positivist using these propositions to create coherence between the MSF framework and objective reality through empirical testing. I do believe that there is an 'objective reality' out there, that is not directly observable by researchers, and an 'observable reality' is not merely an interpretation of the researcher or interpretations of social actors as constructivists might say. However, I also think that positivists and their ways of measuring reality through universal laws negate the complexities of reality. I think we can use theories to help us in getting closer to reality, and explain situations that we attempt to investigate. However, sometimes the "real" world breaks through and destroys the complex stories that we created.

Apart from that, I agree with constructivists that science is not neutral, and there is an effect of the interpretation of the researcher on the research outcome. Therefore, I consider myself a pragmatist or critical realist (Bhaskar, 1979; Sayer, 1999). I think processes, social relations, and culture vary over space and time. However, causation is not a constant conjuncture in logic, but a relation in nature affecting the individuals involved.

Case study approach

A case study approach is applied because it is particularly well-suited to investigate the agenda-setting processes over time (Yin, 2013). Over the years this approach has played a key role in theory development in the social sciences (Blatter & Haverland, 2012), however it has also received a lot of criticism. Before diving deeper into the background of this approach, its advantages and the reasons for choosing it in this particular context, I will explain the definition of case studies.

There is disagreement on what the term case study constitutes. Generically speaking as defined by Blatter & Haverland case studies are: “ non-experimental research approaches studying a small number of cases with a large number and diversity of empirical observations per case, involving an intensive reflection on the relationship between empirical observations and abstract theoretical concepts” (2012, p. 19). This means the units of study can be organizations, individuals, contexts and single or multiple phenomena, which require demarcations and well-defined choices by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). When specifying it to this investigation, it is a research strategy that involves a detailed investigation of one example of a class of phenomenon in its real life context (Yin, 2013; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

This design is applicable when: “the focus of the study is to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions”, “you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe that they are relevant to the phenomenon under study” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545), and you want an understanding of “interwoven complexities associated with interpersonal processes that emerge in a wider social context” (Cronin, 2014, p. 20). The precise analysis of small-N research allows for the identification of unique aspects and grasps complex causal relations. In fact, by thoroughly considering contextual factors case studies are able to assess “whether and how a variable mattered to the outcome”(George & Bennett, 2005, p. 250). To summarize, the general advantage is

that it results in detailed and relevant case-specific data enjoying high internal validity (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

However, the widely adopted critique concerns the external validity of case studies: the inability to generalize the findings. Critics of the case study approach often claim that it cannot provide knowledge about causality, because of its context specificity and small number of cases investigated (Bryman, 2012). To put it briefly, other critiques concern the theory-dependence of case studies, the idea that every case should be treated independently and that cases differ from each other, the dependence on accessible empirical data, and the danger of cognitive biases of the researcher (Collier & Mahoney, 1996; Checkel, 2006). Each of these issues will be addressed in the next sections.

Causal process tracing

Since the adjustment of the MSF model is not yet widely recognized and requires testing, the research aims to explain a puzzling outcome. This means that I engage in an Y-centered research, working backwards, from an observed outcome to identifying possible causes (George & Bennett, 2005). In essence, I will be looking for some sort of causal relationship between actors, processes and this outcome and not focusing on one specific cause (X). The research design adopts a 'case-centric process tracing' approach using the agenda-setting theory of MSF pragmatically: as a heuristic tool to explain the case Strategy for Textiles (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Thus the MSF agenda-setting theory is employed to look at and identify the intervening processes in the three streams (George & Bennett, 2005).

Causal process tracing (CPT) is often used in combination with the MSF, because it carefully describes what happens in the run-up to agenda-change (see Schimmelfennig, 2014; Schön-Quinlivan & Scipioni 2017; Goyal, Howlett & Taeihagh, 2021). The method engages in configurational thinking, implying that multiple different causal factors together create a certain outcome (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). Time and space have an effect on how this causality plays out. This method is applied to *within case* studies because it produces a narrative of a sequence of events in a chronological order.

The goal of cpt is to determine and investigate the link (or its absence) between different factors. In this case, I will check whether the adaptation of the MSF framework is useful in investigating EU agenda-setting. However it is important to

keep in mind that some rival explanations different from the MSF may be recognized, if so these will be explored and explained. By submitting this single-case to precise but careful process tracing and by demonstrating careful descriptions (Mahoney, 2010) the MSF can also be evaluated. To conclude, while the aim is to focus on the case, there is a possibility that some theoretical inferences can be drawn for the suitability of the MSF to the EC.

Case selection & scope

This investigation reviews one case only, the strategy for textiles, and aims to fulfill an explanatory role. So that, I can document (and interpret) the process towards the mentioning of the Textile strategy on the Circular Economy Action Plan (the EC governmental agenda & decision agenda). Afterwhich, I will try to explain under what conditions using the MSF this outcome came about in the EC. It is not possible to analyze the involved actors and processes independent of the EU and textile context. The boundaries within this research project were set by the formed hypothesis based on the adjusted MSF framework that identifies the different streams and actors involved. Apart from that, I will limit the timeframe from the first mention of textiles in (inter)national reports until the publication of the strategy on the 20th of March 2020 in the CEAP. The later publications for the stakeholder and public consultation are used to grasp the vision of the European Commission and the stakeholders involved.

4.2 Data collection

To precisely reconstruct the chain of events, this case study has collected evidence from a multitude of sources, both primary and secondary sources, using different methods. It will use document analysis complemented by stakeholder interviews. This is also called triangulation, and applied by researchers to bring together a lot of evidence that generates credibility (Eisner, 2017). Hereby the potential biases involved in single case studies, single sources and single researchers can be mitigated. The data collection phase involved three stages:

1. A document research to identify primary data sources, have a basic understanding necessary for the interviews and collect secondary data;
2. Elite interviewing and collecting primary data resulting in document recommendations.
3. Additional research to fill the missing data that came up from the investigation of the first two stages.

However, the distinction between these stages was in practice not as clear. The specific methods and sources will be described in the next sections.

Document analysis

A document or content analysis is a systematic strategy for scrutinizing and evaluating written materials (Bowen, 2009). Such documents include texts and visuals not generated or created by the researcher (Karppinen & Moe, 2012). The systematic analysis helps to draw out meaning, comprehensively describe a phenomenon and in this way gain empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). There is a range of different documents to be used in these types of analyses. These are agendas, minutes of meetings, letters, press releases, policy proposals, discussion papers, webinars, or event programs. This variety of sources can produce context-sensitive insights. To resume, this shows that a document analysis fits the usage of the MSF to explain this case study. As it calls for an in-depth study of contextual factors and thus highlights causal relations. However, I want to distinguish between documents used in the analysis and prior research literature used in the previous chapters. Therefore the references are separated accordingly.

Official public documents and articles dealing with sustainable textiles at the EU level will be reviewed and analyzed. The first type of used data are EU-governmental documents. This research will specifically rely on sources from within the EC such as agendas, minutes, strategies, and other public forms of communication from the different DG's and general Commission. Additionally, communication between the Commission, other EU bodies, and lobby groups is also of importance. Therefore, their policy documents, reports, and media coverage are studied.

Stakeholder interviews

Only a part of the agenda process can be identified in written sources. Content, as with any other evidence, runs the risk of showing an incomplete picture of the true course of events (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Apart from that, some information is not accessible or does not even exist in a written form. This is relevant in the complex agenda-setting process that relies on testimonies of participants and observers of meetings and discussions from which the agenda arose. Therefore, the second data collection method was elite interviewing.

An elite or stakeholder interviewee holds a senior or middle management position, has functional responsibility in a specific policy field, and possibly has more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public (Welch, Marschan-Piekkari, Penttinen, & Tahvanainen, 2002; Richards, 1996, p. 199). To be clear, elite does not necessarily mean individuals in top positions of organizations and institutions with an elite status, but individuals that have influential networks, social capital, and strategic positions able to exert influence (Harvey, 2011). The benefits of stakeholder interviews are that it can provide insights on decisions and actions behind a sequence of events and make a reconstruction; grasps what a specific group of people think, and supports or guides earlier collected information from documentary sources (Richards, 1996; Tansey, 2007; Hochschild, 2009).

Interviewee identification and sampling

When using elite interviews to collect data in a process tracing research it is of importance to consider which interview subjects are selected. Since this thesis wants to gather information about agenda-setting at the EU elite level, only a specific group of actors are participating in this process. However, as explained in chapter 3, many actors are operating at different levels and have different positions. Gaining access and coming into contact with the relevant participants was complex in this research. There was a limited thesis timeframe so therefore, a small non-probability sample had to be drawn. The strategy behind this selection was a combination between purposive and chain referral sampling (Burnham et al., 2008; Tansey, 2007).

Based on the analytical framework and exploratory interviews, a list of key elites was set-up. This included individuals working for the EU at the Cabinet, DG, and EP level. As well as stakeholders representing the media, academia, independent think tanks, businesses, civil society organisations and ngos. For textiles and environmental policy, the most significant businesses are those either engaging in the production and distribution of textiles (the entire chain from yarn to retail), or those developing textile production machinery, systems and software. The centrality of climate change and human rights violations to discussions about textiles makes it likely that organisations established to protect the environment and fair trade try to be involved in the agenda setting process. However, due to the Covid Crisis and the developments at the EU, many potential interviewees were very busy and hard to contact. Therefore, from the first interview onwards the interviewees were specifically asked if they had suggestions and contact information of individuals relevant to EU agenda-setting concerning textiles.

In total 2 exploratory and 9 elite interviews were conducted via (video) calls (via MS teams, Zoom, cellphone) that durated between 30-60 minutes (See table 3 ; annex I for full list). These took place between november 2020 and June 2021. These were all recorded, to allow for precise transcripts and revision during the analysis.

Table 3: *Overview of the respondents*

Nr of Respondents	Type	Department or Organization	Roles
2	European Commission	Timmermans Cabinet & DG GROW	Policy advisor & senior diplomatic expert
1	European Parliament	Dutch Socialists & Democrats	Policy advisor
2	Academia & Think Tanks	NETFAS, ETP, ECDPM, SAXION	Expert & policy officer
2	Trade & business associations	EURATEX & Ecopreneur	Director or head of sustainability department
2	NGOs and civil society organizations	European Environmental Bureau & Fairtrade Advocacy Office	Policy officer

Conducting interviews

The agenda-setting process is highly political, and many of the involved elites had public positions resulting in reluctance or hesitation to share specific information. Parallel to the importance of creating a thesis that does not misinterpret findings, the principal ethical concern was the appropriate treatment of respondents and the management of the provided data. I treated the respondents in line with common research guidelines. I had to create a trustworthy relationship based on informed consent with my respondents to get access to missing information. I tried to be as transparent as possible and provide information concerning: me as the researcher, the research topic, interview duration, data usage, where the results will be published and asked respondents' preferences concerning anonymity. Respondents had the opportunity to decline to record as well as withdraw their participation. Apart from

that, I experienced that I had to show a high level of expertise on textiles and EU-agenda setting in the emails requesting interviews and during the interviews. This was necessary to receive a reply and to plan interviews. When the respondents respected me as the researcher, I received more in-depth answers during the interviews.

A semi-structured approach was employed, in which the order and amount of questions are flexible. Conducting elite interviews requires flexibility and adjustment to the ambiance regarding the choice of words and speaking voice (Dexter, 2006). Hence, my interview jargon, questions, and style shifted between respondents to make them feel comfortable. The semi-structured approach was particularly useful when interviewing stakeholders concerning such a complex issue as textile agenda setting. I wanted to allow respondents to raise new topics, use probes and ask unplanned questions to deepen my knowledge about the field. Nevertheless, I did employ a topic list with example questions and conversation starters (see Annex II). Some of the predefined questions were linked to the MSF theory, while others focussed on the case. However, there were different topic lists for every interviewee depending on the missing data from the document analysis and the earlier conversations. Therefore in practice, before every interview, I made a personalized topic list.

4.3 Operationalization & data analysis

The interview transcripts and the documents recommended by the agenda-setting elites, generated a large volume of data. Seeing that, a common method for data analysis was chosen. One of the pitfalls of CPT research is the lack of theoretical frameworks or their ill-definition making it difficult to use these to guide the empirical work (Della Porta, 2008). Therefore, in chapter 3 and specifically in section 3.2 a set of necessary conditions as well as hypotheses were presented adjusted to agenda-setting in the EC. I will carefully review the three necessary conditions and the corresponding hypotheses (i.e. the independent variables) in the next sections.

Table 4: *The operationalization of the variables in the adjusted MSF*

Conditions	Hypotheses	Operationalization of indicators	Score	Data Source
C1: The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe,	<p>D1: The problem stream is ripe if</p> <p>(1) Attention to an issue relevant for the Textile industry is raised in which the EU-government is held responsible for correcting the discrepancy.</p> <p>(2) Textile industry is interpreted as being problematic to society's values, ideals, or expectations by individuals not part of EU institutions.</p>	<p>(1.1) Attention: The EU is mentioned as an actor responsible for action.</p> <p>(2) Problematic: negative word usage, indication of what the problem is.</p>	<p>Low attention; there is no to small attention of interest groups and stakeholders in Brussel, low international attention.</p> <p>High attention: in a substantial number of interest groups in Brussel, media outlets, the issue is raised. transnational attention.</p>	Discussion papers, news items, protests, discussions on textile related congresses or events.
	<p>D2: The political stream is ripe if at least one governmental EU institution is (partly)receptive to a specific issue.</p>	<p>(1) Receptivity: signals of the issue entering the agendas of lower actors or subsystems, including a favorable choice of words concerning the issue of textiles.</p> <p>(1.1) EU institutions: EP, EUCO, Council of ministers, policy officers, individuals, and DGs,</p>	<p>Low to No ripeness: The issue of textiles is not discussed on lower-level agendas. No receptivity is shown. Or the issue is negatively discussed.</p> <p>High Ripeness: DGs show receptivity, or multiple other sub-level agendas of institutions show receptivity.</p>	Minutes of meetings, output by sub-units, contact between interest groups and EU institutions, and largely depend on oral information of interviewees

	<p>D3: The policy stream is ripe if the policy community is familiar with at least one alternative to the policy problem in question, that is either (1) technically feasible, (2) acceptable to the values of the community, or (3) anticipates future constraints and (4) are discussed by the policy community.</p>	<p>(1) Alternatives: More than 1 policy paper exists or the same solution is endorsed by multiple groups in publications. (2.1) Technical feasibility: Discussion on the proposed solutions is possible, however, the solution seems feasible at EU level (2.2) Acceptable to community values: multiple stakeholders take part in the publication of the report. (2.3) Anticipates future constraints: Has a section discussing this within paper. (2.4) Discussed: mentioned in interviews.</p>	<p>Low to no Ripeness: No policy alternatives exist or there is no familiarity. High Ripeness: If there is more than one policy alternative. note: There can be concerns in the policy community on each of these policy alternatives.</p>	<p>In oral discussions with stakeholders as well as online reactions. Look at policy reports, policy community meetings.</p>
<p>C2: A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window</p>	<p>H1: An agenda window opens in the problem stream if: (1) a relevant indicator deteriorates.(2) a monitoring study points to a discrepancy between a program's goal and the program's effects; or (3) a focusing event relevant to the policy field in question occurs.</p>	<p>(1) Indicator: objective assessments of a condition. (2) Monitoring study: The existence of knowledge regarding an issue due to a monitoring study or feedback. (3) Focussing event</p>	<p>Not Open: None of these three happen. Open: One of these three changes.</p>	<p>Scientific studies, media outlets, interview information.</p>

	<p>H2: An agenda window opens in the political stream if (1) a new Commission takes office; (2) In case there is an EU mood regarding a problem that reaches the Commission.</p> <p>H3: “...” the European Council publishes acts that provide an impetus for the EU’s development.</p> <p>H4: “...” (at least) one branch of the EU’s executive or legislative asks one (other branch of the EU’s executive) to address an issue.</p>	<p>(1) Turnover: New Commission takes office</p> <p>(2) EU mood: The public display support or opposition to a problem</p> <p>(3) Euco publication of Act</p> <p>(4) Specific request of addressal</p>	<p>Not open: None of these happen.</p> <p>Open: One of these three changes</p>	<p>ECI, Eurobarometer, media outlets, consilium, European council conclusions, publications office of the European Union.</p>
<p>C3: A policy and/or political entrepreneur try to couple the streams</p>	<p>H5: The policy entrepreneur couples the streams</p> <p>H6: The political entrepreneur couples the streams</p>	<p>Actors who invest their time and resources to strategically couple the three streams (problem, politics & policy)</p>	<p>Not Present: When no specific individual is mentioned.</p> <p>Present: Stakeholders mention an individual of importance in the process multiple times or different stakeholders mention the same individual.</p>	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p>

Note: D1, D2 and D3 are included because these are necessary when operationalizing the hypotheses. D4, D5 and D6 are excluded.

Data analysis

A qualitative data analysis software package called Nvivo (version 12), was adopted to analyse the large volume of document and interview data gathered. This software was used to code parts of these texts and the coding scheme for the following coding rounds can be found in Annex III. First, the data was coded exploratively using the printed interview texts and post-its. This was done to get a grasp of the information and see which kind of specific themes, actors and events were mentioned. Also the recommended policy papers, research documents and EU-specific publications were loaded into Nvivo. Second, a round of open coding of fragments of the texts that may be important for the research took place within NVivo. The third step was axial coding for subcategories according to the MSF Framework (the different indicators e.g. turnover or focussing events). The fourth step was selective coding to extract the most important codes from the earlier rounds and to categorize them under the main themes of the MSF (the streams, agenda windows, entrepreneurs). In this last phase I saved some selective codes not part of the MSF that attracted my attention to be discussed in the conclusion (called alternative explanations, frames). This was done to prevent myself as a researcher from hypothesis testing tunnel vision. This combination of induction and deduction was employed to obtain useful sensitizing concepts from the data and further extend them to answer the research question.

Part II Results



Chapter 5. Case study analysis

This chapter investigates how the multiple streams developed into agenda change at the EC agenda concerning the Textile strategy. Before the analysis, the first section explains the case concerning its policy development and implementation of climate and textile-related policies. Because a lot has happened over the years regarding this case, this section is structured by big events. It might otherwise be difficult for readers to follow how these streams have unfolded the way they did. An overview of these events in a chronological order can be found at the end of section 5.1 in table 4.

5.1 Case description: an overview of the EU textile-related developments

Competitive industry issues

Since the 1980s, the textile industry has experienced significant restructuring, modernization, and globalization. For instance, since the 1980s, the rise of imported goods from low-wage newly industrialized countries raised the cost pressure on the textile sector in the EU. Initially, the EU industry was heavily protected by the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA)⁴. From 1995 onwards, progressive trade liberalization took place when the World Trade Organization (WTO) replaced the GATT. The substitution resulted in a shift towards a free market allowing for import and export from across the globe. Consequently, employment now moved to low-wage production opportunities that resided outside the EU and the EU lost its traditional EU industries (such as spinning and weaving) (De Brito, Carbone, & Blanquart, 2008; Taplin, 2006). Along with these changes, the supply of goods changed from standardized goods available for longer production periods, towards a high number of collections consisting of fewer goods (Tudor, 2018). This phenomenon is called fast fashion for the clothing sector, inviting customers into stores as frequently as possible to increase purchases (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006).

At this point, the European industry was standing at a crossroads, it faced severe challenges in keeping and improving its global market position against the rising competition and technological progress (Keenan, Saritas, & Kroener, 2004). Apart

⁴ This agreement was installed to protect high-wage economies from losing their jobs in the textile sector, while also stimulating developing countries in a controlled way (Albernathy et al., 2006; Richero & Ferrigno, 2017).

from that, the social impacts of the loss of employment started to show. In 2003, the EC published a Communication that outlined the future challenges faced by the textiles and clothing sector in the EU (EC, 2003b). As a result, the EC launched the High-Level Group for textiles⁵ and clothing that existed between 2004-2006. The group formulated recommendations about sustainable development standards for textiles (EC, 2004) and installed a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for displaced workers in 2006. Likewise, the Technology Platform for the Future of Textiles and Clothing (TPFTC) emphasized in their vision for 2020, as also the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) did, the need for a transformation of the EU industry into a sustainable competitive global industrial player (EURATEX, 2004, p. 10; EMCC, 2004; EMCC, 2008). Based on these recommendations, the Commission developed an 'Action List' to examine chemical substances used in the production of textiles (Ramssoedh, 2017). This Action List coincided with the developments following the strategy for a future Community Policy for Chemicals (EC, 2001), that resulted in a regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), and the establishment of a European Chemicals Agency (Regulation 1907/2006).

Nowadays, EU companies focus on a wide variety of higher value products, such as industrial textiles and nonwovens (industrial filters, hygiene products, products for the automotive and medical sector) and high-quality garments (such as design clothing) instead of the mass production of simple products (EC, 2019d; Taplin, 2014). Since the EU had lost most of its traditional industries, it was keen on preserving some textile-related production within the EU. Therefore, the EU's focus shifted towards technological advancement and expertise.

Sustainable development & circularity

During this same period, different pressures to address climate issues at the EU level emerged. The initial goal was GHG reduction, which was driven by the evidence on climate change by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 1988), the Earth Summit' agreement on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992), and the Kyoto Protocol (1997). The EU had committed to take the lead in reducing GHG emissions and to adopt limitation targets. Already in the 1990s, natural and recycled fibers dominated trade shows', trend forecasters, and industry

⁵ The group consisted of 29 members including EU Commissioners, Industry Ministers from four MS, the EP, the textile regions, industry, trade unions, retail, and importer and distributor representatives

journalists' visions on sustainability. In line with these developments, the EU ecolabel was established in 1992 (Regulation 1980/2000), a voluntary scheme that producers, importers, and retailers could use to label their products with a low environmental impact and to provide transparency to consumers.

In 2004 the WorldWatch Institute published a specialized issue on the consumption society, mentioning textiles as a globally neglected issue (WorldWatch Institute, 2004, p. 97). From 2008 onwards, the EC started focussing on sustainable growth. The EU Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Action Plan (EC, 2008) marked a start, followed by the waste framework directive (Directive 2008/98/EC). In 2011, this was strengthened by the vision of creating a resource-efficient and competitive economy in the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (EC, 2011a) and the New Industrial Revolution (EC, 2012a).

However, the holistic notion of a circular economy reached the European policy-making field around 2013 (Völker, Kovacic & Strand, 2020). In a nutshell, the circular economy model is a systemic approach based on principles to increase the prolonged use of natural resources, to diminish future utilization of these resources and lowering the waste levels (Murray, Skene & Waynes, 2017; Jacometti, 2019). This idea of circularity was strongly interconnected and reinforced by other policy areas, such as the Eco-Design Directive (2009/125/EC), and Eco-Innovation Action Plan (EC, 2012b), the Ecolabel Scheme (Regulation No 66/2010), Green Public Procurement (Council Directive 2014/24/EU), or Integrated Product Policy (EC, 2003a).

Rana Plaza & the Sustainability Compact

On the 24th of April 2013, a garment factory in Bangladesh collapsed causing over a thousand deaths and injuring approximately 2.500 people (mentioned by all interviewees; Williamson & Lutz, 2020). The flaws of the building's construction were known by the factory owners, and still the laborers were forced to work there. European brands such as Mango, Primark, and H&M were sourcing products from Rana Plaza. This tragic event led to various media and social campaigns such as #whomademyclothes by Fashion Revolution (e.g. Clean Clothes Campaign & Fairtrade Europe) demanding a paradigm shift in garment supply chains. The tragedy

itself and publicity it received, increased European consumers' awareness of the textile industry.

Different European institutions publicly disapproved of the situation (EC, 2013a). The EU committed itself to enhance the working conditions of the garment laborers in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Bangladeshi government in the Sustainability Compact (EC, 2013b). Subsequently, the EC published a second statement in 2014 (Froman et al., 2015). Both statements called for EU and international companies subcontracting in Bangladesh to install programs auditing subcontractors and to compensate victims. Despite the EC's proposed support for the Bangladeshi government, and its awareness of the human rights violations, none of the official statements resulted in policies to reshape the sector (EC, 2015b).

The First Circular Economy Action Plan

In 2014, the EC guided by president Barosso announced 'Towards a circular economy, a zero-waste program for Europe' (EC, 2014). The program formulated circularity with reference to resource efficiency and waste reduction (Völker, Kovacic & Strand, 2020). However, when the Juncker Commission took office in 2014, the EU was heavily affected by the economic crisis. Consequently, the package was redrafted, prioritizing the economy (such as boosting global competitiveness, promoting sustainable economic growth, and creating jobs) over the environment. The preparation of the new package was led by the first vice-president Timmermans in cooperation with multiple DGs.

Accordingly, in 2015 the EC released the Circular Economy Action Plan 'Closing the Loop' (hereafter, CEAP) (EC, 2015d). The plan set out a roadmap to encourage the transition towards a circular economy and sustainable economic growth covering the entire cycle. In the same year, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) were launched. Goal number 12 specifically referred to sustainable production and consumption (Gabriel & Luque, 2020; Interviewee, A; UN, 2015). Lastly, another important event was the ratification of the Paris Agreement by the EU in 2016 setting the famous targets for 2030.

The Flagship Initiative on the garment sector

In 2014 the EC started its preparation on the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector. The EP welcomed this initiative in 2015. However, not all DG's and MS supported this initiative. The approach that was chosen resulted in a multi-stakeholder platform that was supposed to coordinate the changes the sector required. This did not result in EU legislation on mandatory due diligence in the textile supply chain, and the idea was never further developed. It did however activate many stakeholders to continue their advocating work (Global Fashion Agenda, 2017a; Global Fashion Agenda, 2017b).

The Second Circular Economy Action Plan

The second Circular Economy action plan 'For a cleaner and more Competitive Europe' was released in support of the European Green Deal on 11 March 2020 (EC, 2020a). This plan introduced initiatives along the entire life cycle of products, targeting their design, promoting circular economy processes, fostering sustainable consumption, and ensuring that the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible (EC, 2020c). In March 2020, the EC officially announced the EU Strategy for Sustainable textiles. The strategy aims to 'extend the industrial competitiveness and innovation in the textile sector, boost the EU market for sustainable and circular textiles, including the market for textile reuse, addressing fast fashion, and driving new business models' (EC, 2020c). A comprehensive set of measures are used to achieve this plan (EC, 2020a). In 2021 DG ENV and DG GROW published a Roadmap to inform citizens and stakeholders about the work and planning of the EC (EC, 2021). The Textile Strategy is currently in the public consultation phase.

Table 4: *An overview of the developments in the EU textile sector*

YEAR	Events
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishment of IPCC
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ● Launch of EU ecolabel
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WTO replaced GATT
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kyoto Protocol
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EC High Level Group For Textiles ● Worldwatch Institute Publication on consumption

2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● REACH regulation ● European Globalisation Adjustment Fund
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EC: Sustainable Consumption and Production Plan ● The Waste Framework Directive
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ecodesign Directive
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EP: Motion For a Resolution on csr in international trade agreements. ● The Ecolabel Scheme
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe ● Eco-Innovation Action Plan
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The New Industrial Revolution
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focussing event: Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh ● Circular Economy paper Ellen McArthur Foundation ● EU Joins Bangladesh Sustainability Compact
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EC publishes Circular Economy Package ● Turnover: Jean-Claude Juncker is elected as EC president. ● Green Public Procurement
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UN SDGs are launched ● European Clothing Action Plan starts ● Paris Agreement is ratified by the EU ● Adoption of first Circular Economy Action Plan
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EP resolution: New strategy for trade and investment
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EP resolution: EU flagship initiative on the garment sector
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EC Plastics Strategy is published ● Fridays for Future movement Greta Thunberg
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EC reflection paper: Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030 ● Turnover: Ursula von der Leyen appointed as EC president ● Green Deal Release.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● March: Second Circular Economy Action Plan is published ● Strategy for Sustainable Textiles

5.2 Analysis

Now that all the events in the run-up to the sustainable textile strategy have been outlined, it is time to analyze which factors increased the likeliness of textiles to reach the governmental and decision agenda of the European Commission. Following the adjusted MSF framework and its necessary conditions, this section highlights the state of the streams, whether and how agenda windows opened, and if the policy or political entrepreneurs were involved in coupling the streams. The analysis will look at two specific narratives: the Garment Sector Initiative (sustainable textiles entering the governmental top & low-level agendas) and the Second Circular Economy Action Plan (Sustainable textiles entering the governmental and decision agenda). Interviewee G summarized the choice for these two narratives perfectly: “[*Rana Plaza*] had triggered the first [textile agenda] shockwave. To be honest, it had brought about a lot of discussion, but not that much action. The recent developments and the fact that climate is at the top of the EU agenda, made [circularity] a topic hard to get around.”

The use of two within-case analyses will enable me to highlight the different processes leading to different yet interconnected agenda outcomes. It will also permit a more in-depth analysis of the theoretical components of the MSF if the cases mutually reinforce each other. Thereby, I can determine whether they facilitate or hinder the development of an EC agenda focussing on sustainability of the textile industry. An overview of the analysis of both cases and the conclusions considering the necessary conditions, definitions and hypothesis can be found in Table 5. It is noteworthy to mention that the first specific entry of textiles on the EC agenda concerned the EU’s competitive position in 2004. I have decided not to outline this process in the analysis because it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

5.3 Government agenda entrance: The Garment Sector Initiative

This section will start by analysing whether the definitions of stream ripeness are met. I will present the hypotheses for window openings and entrepreneurs to provide a clear overview for the readers, to at the end of the analysis check whether the necessary conditions were met.

The problem stream

D1: The problem stream is ripe if (1) attention to an issue relevant for the policy field

in question is raised in which the EU-government is held responsible for correcting the discrepancy and (2) that issue is interpreted as being problematic to society's values, ideals, or expectations by individuals in and around government.

In the run-up to the Rana Plaza incident, multiple problems circulated in the problem stream related to textiles; economic, environmental, and social. Initially, economic puzzles concerning the threats to EU employment of the globalized industry and the international competitive position of the EU textile sector dominated the problem stream (Interviewee A). As a result of the EC communication, the High-Level Group for textiles, and the TPFTC/EMMC an urgency for a transformation of the industry was recognized. The decrease of market access affected businesses, and the loss of employment affected citizens. The EU media highlighted these issues (Casey, 2008; Croning, 2005; Fleming, 2004).

Apart from that, the environmental and social problems concerning the production, consumption, and end-of-life of textiles started to gain more global attention. The UN Global Compact, the Worldwatch, and many more studies published facts about the textile industry. NGOs⁶ began targeting the fashion industry to fight for better working conditions, cause less environmental degradation, and push retailers and consumers to make purchase decisions based on ethical standards (Krier, 2005). However, a textile-based expert organization or active sustainable or social lobby was largely missing (Interviewee A, H). None of these reports specifically mentioned these textile issues as EU responsibilities or priorities for action. Even though there was problematization of the issues in the textile sector and attention was raised, the EU was not addressed as the responsible venue. For this reason, the problem stream was not ripe concerning the social and environmental problems in the textile industry. Additionally, D1 was not met.

The problem window

H1: *An agenda window opens in the problem stream if; a) a relevant indicator deteriorates; b) a monitoring study points to a discrepancy between a program's goal and the program's effects; or c) a focusing event relevant to the policy field in question occurs.*

⁶ The European Fairtrade organization, Fairtrade Labelling Organization, Fairtrade Advocacy Office, Oxfam, the Clean Clothes campaign (Interviewee I; Neyland, 2008).

Something abruptly changed when the tragedy at Rana Plaza happened, which can be considered a focussing event relevant to the policy field in question (Interviewee A, C, D, F, H). The event increased the attention of EU media, interest groups, and citizens to the problems in the textile supply chain concerning human rights abuses and required action at the European level. Interviewee D explained: “*Fashion Revolution and other networks laid the groundwork in bringing[.]Fast fashion [to the front] as a problem.*” For the first time, the public linked the clothes bought in the EU and the conditions of the laborers outside of the EU (Interviewee A, D). The policy community demanded an appropriate response from the EU since the tragedy could have been avoided. In conclusion, hypothesis 1 was met because a focusing event relevant to the textile policy field occurred.

The political stream

D2: The political stream is ripe if at least one governmental EU institution is (partly) receptive to a specific issue.

The opening of the problem window urged EU politicians to respond to these atrocities. At this point, there were already signals that textiles reached the governmental agenda of the EC in the form of communications. However, the political stream reflected a lack of interest in delegating international corporate social responsibility competencies to the EU for textiles. Despite the inclusion of human rights conditionality clauses in trade agreements since 1995 (EC, 1995), the earlier Green Paper (EC, 2001b) and a renewed strategy for CSR (EC, 2001a) showing the EC’s general interest in CSR. In the public statements, the EC called upon the responsibility of the Bangladeshi government to take immediate action to relieve the circumstances (EC, 2013a; EC, 2013b). The period before Rana Plaza, showed that the EC agenda was ripe concerning economic or trade issues for textiles (EC, 2003b; EC, 2004), and that textile-related climate issues already had momentum in the REACH, Green Public Procurement, and the eco-design directive. Because the EC’s and EP’s word usage was initially not favorable to an all-encompassing EU strategy for a corporate socially responsible textile value chain, the political stream was not ripe. All in all, D2 was not met.

Political window

Since the political stream was not ripe, I checked whether an agenda window in the political stream might have had an effect.

H2: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Commission takes office; or b) In case there is an EU mood regarding a problem that reaches the Commission.*

In 2014 Juncker was chosen to be the new president, and a new commission took office. Neven Mimica (the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development) and DG DEVCO were assigned to manage the Flagship Initiative for the Garment sector. The EC started with informal consultations with MS about creating an initiative, and a stakeholder questionnaire was sent out, which was answered by 55 organizations (Alcain, 2019). The results showed that stakeholders and MS were supportive of the initiative (EC, 2015c). In 2015, Cecilia Malmström (Commissioner for Trade) gave a keynote speech about responsible supply chain ensuring that choices made by European consumers “do not undermine human rights, labor rights, the protection of the environment and economic opportunity” (EC, 2015e). Another smaller set of NGOs requested the EC to set up a more ambitious plan involving legislation (Interviewee B, I). However, while stakeholders and MS were supportive of the multistakeholder initiative, it never came about.

The Eurobarometer of 2014 showed that for 40% of the respondents human rights are important personal values. This indicator remained relatively stable over the years, not showing an increase after Rana Plaza. Therefore, there was not a stark European mood regarding human rights.

Council

H3: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Council Presidency takes office; or b) one or consecutive Council Presidencies release their working program(s)*

H4: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if the European Council publishes conclusions that provide an impetus for the EU's development.*

The Council of the European Union presented a set of conclusions supporting the multistakeholder efforts and stimulated the EC and MS to share best practices and facilitate a dialogue (8833/16, Council, 2016a, 2016b). Again, the Council published supportive conclusions and called the commission to devote effort to textile value chains: “In a comprehensive manner that also extends beyond development

cooperation to promote a safer, greener and fairer garment industry” (9381/17). However, the EC responded on the 7th of September 2017 that the Bangladesh Sustainability compact continued to be the best way to address the vital issues and published a staff working document (EC, 2017a, 2017b).

Questions by EU legislative or executive branches

H5: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if (at least) one branch of the EU's executive or legislative asks one (other branch of the EU's executive to address an issue.*

The EP has been positioning itself as an advocate of human rights before Rana Plaza. It demanded the systematic inclusion of CSR provisions in all future trade agreements (2005/2057(INI); 2009/2201(INI)). The EP indicated the importance of the EC to act, in the form of resolutions, questions, and own-initiative reports (2013/2638(RSP); (2015/2589(RSP)). In 2017, MEP Lola Sanchez presented the EU Flagship Initiative on the Garment Sector, an initiative report requesting the EC to go beyond voluntary initiatives and introduce binding legislation for European stakeholders protecting human rights in the textile industry (EP, 2017a). This call was repeated in 2017 by a group of MEPs requesting a public consultation process for civil society organizations (EP, 2017b). Within the EP this resulted in 18 questions directed to the EC concerning labor abuses in the textile sector between 2014-2016 (EP, 2014). However, while the own initiative report was backed by a coalition of NGOs and trade organizations, the textile industry opposed the efforts made towards EU-wide legislation. There was no broad support by stakeholders, and the Trade Commissioner did not reply with a legislative proposal on due diligence in the clothing and textile sector.

While there were different moments to open an EC agenda window, the flagship initiative lacked momentum within the Commission. This because it failed to deliver a far-reaching strategy for the EU, as well as, the lack of acknowledgment of legislation as a workable option within DG DEVCO. The CSR issues in the industry were framed as the responsibility of the Bangladeshi government and the multinational textile companies. This means that despite Commission turnover an agenda window was not opened in the political stream and hypothesis 2 was not met. There was no indication that a change of the council presidency or their working programs opened an agenda window. This means hypothesis 3 was not met. Even though the council published supportive acts for the multi-stakeholder platform, no agenda window opened in the

EC and hypothesis 4 was not met. Since the Trade commissioner did not adhere to the questions raised by the EC also a political window was not opened, and hypothesis 5 was not met.

The policy stream

D3: The policy stream is ripe if the policy community is familiar with at least one alternative to the policy problem in question, that is either (1) technically feasible, (2) acceptable to the values of the community, or (3) anticipates future constraints and (4) are discussed by the policy community.

In 2016 DG DEVCO and the European External Action Service (EEAS) presented different policy options for the responsible management of the supply chain in the garment sector (AETS, 2016). These concerned development cooperation, best practices sharing, and raising awareness (AETS, 2016, pp. 128-129). The EU was already familiar with the enforcement of due diligence legislation in the timber regulation, the conflict minerals regulation, and the directive on non-financial reporting. Apart from that, multiple MS were working on due diligence legislation (including France, the Netherlands, and the UK) providing policy examples (Interviewee F). Lastly, CSR was advocated by numerous civil society organizations and companies in the early 2000s that worked on voluntary standards for garment supply chains. The policy community was familiar with at least one alternative to the human rights abuses in the garment supply chain that were discussed by the community. Therefore, according to D3 the policy stream is ripe.

Policy or political entrepreneurs

H6: *A policy entrepreneur couples the streams.*

H7: *A political entrepreneur couples the streams.*

There were no specific policy or political entrepreneurs mentioned by the respondents. Hence, hypotheses 10 and 11 are not met. Unfortunately, there is no information to be found on Neven Mimica in this process as it appears that she could have been a potential political entrepreneur.

Necessary conditions

C1: *The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe.*

C2: *A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window.*

C3: *A policy entrepreneur or political entrepreneur engages in coupling the three streams.*

To conclude, the problem stream and the policy stream were ripe. However, because the political stream did not ripen, necessary condition 1 was not met. Secondly, a focusing event relevant to the textile policy field occurred in the problem stream, leading to the opening of an agenda window. This means necessary condition 2 was met. Given that, the three streams were not coupled by a policy or political entrepreneur, necessary condition 3 was not met. However, this is the first example of textiles reaching the EC governmental agenda, serving as the agenda basis for the next section.

5.4 Decision agenda entrance: The Second Circular Economy Action Plan

Analogous to the previous section I will examine the definitions of stream ripeness and the hypotheses, to in the end conclude whether the necessary conditions were met.

The problem stream

D1: The problem stream is ripe if (1) attention to an issue relevant for the policy field in question is raised in which the EU-government is held responsible for correcting the discrepancy and (2) that issue is interpreted as being problematic to society's values, ideals, or expectations by individuals in and around government.

Parallel to the due diligence narrative about the textile industry, the problem of climate change was gaining momentum in the EU. While there were earlier attempts to combat climate change at the EU level in the form of environmental action plans, roadmaps and strategies, the debate was intensified with the publication of the SDG's and the Paris Agreement. More information about different issues related to the EU textile industry was published about its energy usage, workers conditions, use and release of chemicals, and the rise of solid waste (Allwood et al., 2006; Claudio, 2007; Clark & Charter, 2007; EIPRO, 2006). Furthermore, the limits of the linear take, make and dispose system in the textile industry were highlighted by experts and practitioners. In response to the EC's Sustainable Production and Consumption Action Plan the Retailers Environmental Action Plan was set-up by progressive retailers in

2016.⁷ The EEA environmental indicator report highlighted the environmental impacts of the consumption of textiles in the EU (2014, p. 114), it has a specific section devoted to EU action in the textile and clothing sector (p. 105). This means that the problem stream concerning the sustainability in the textile sector was ripe a few years before the second CEAP was published in 2019 and D1 was met.

Problem windows

H1: *An agenda window opens in the problem stream if: a) a relevant indicator deteriorates; b) a monitoring study points to a discrepancy between a program's goal and the program's effects; or c) a focusing event relevant to the policy field in question occurs.*

While the problem stream was ripe the issue of textiles was not taken up in the first circular CEAP. Therefore, I will check whether something changed between 2014-2019 in the problem stream. Interviewee A summarized what happened: "There were a variety of different factors that all entered at the same time. Labour conditions, microplastics, an inadequate supply of cotton on the world market, fast fashion with accelerating clothing production cycles reducing the clothing prices leading to increased turnover". Additionally in 2018, a relevant indicator deteriorated, when the SDG index & dashboard report showed that the EU scored the lowest concerning goal 12 (Sachs et al., 2018). This was strengthened when in 2019 the president of the UN Economic and Social Council announced at the Sustainable Fashion Summit that "sustainable fashion is key to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda" (Jacometti, 2019).

At the beginning of 2019, the EC published a reflection paper *Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030* that identified textiles as a current trend requiring attention (EC, 2019a, p. 102). Apart from that, in 2019 a reflection on the implementation of the first CEAP was published by the EC (EC, 2019b). This report showed how the EU successfully reached its program objectives and identified priority sectors (e.g. textiles) the EU should continue to support. It proposed a focus on more research, innovation and investment for these prioritized sectors in the next action plan (p. 10).

⁷ Members participate in REAP to take "the Circular Economy agenda forward by contributing voluntarily to reducing the environmental footprint of their activities and their supply chain, promoting more sustainable products, and raising awareness among consumers" (REAP, 2015).

The discussion on circular economy was instigated by a report from the Ellen MacArthur foundation pushing for a transition towards the circular economy in the EU mentioning the limits of linear consumption (2013, p. 5). Concerning the opening of agenda windows in the problem stream, an indicator deteriorated and a monitoring study was published. This means that an agenda window was opened in the problem stream and hypothesis 1 was met.

The political stream

D2: The political stream is ripe if at least one governmental EU institution is (partly) receptive to a specific issue.

At the EU political level there have been various attempts to incorporate climate and circularity into EU policy making starting from the 1990s. However, these policies often developed separately and focussed on different concerns: climate change, energy security, competitive position (Völker, Kovacic, & Strand, 2020). Since the New Industrial Revolution, the 'limiting of resource usage' and 'enhancing resource efficiency' were presented as key approaches to manage climate-related problems and resource deficiency. This was the first political announcement of a move towards a closed-loop economy or circular economy, mentioning textiles (EC, 2012a, p. 20). With an emphasis on strategies to enhance the EU's competitive position in the textile sector. Likewise the zero waste program in 2014 formulated circularity as resource efficiency and waste reduction, however the EU was heavily affected by the economic crisis (Völker, Kovacic, & Strand, 2020). Consequently the package was redrafted with more economic policy focus than the environment.

Again the CEAP 2015 formulated waste in terms of 'lost business opportunities' (EC, 2015d, p. 4), however, the CEAP did not include textiles in the plan in 2015. During that time for the EC, "textiles was one of the many [high-impact sectors]. And it was definitely not the number one, number two or number three either" (Interviewee, B). Interviewee I confirmed that: "I think the first [CEAP] was about establishing the circular economy. It was perhaps quite a new topic, although it wasn't, because the commission has been working with resource efficiency for quite long. In the first circular economy action plan there were a lot of waste issues to deal with that initiated the work with a circular economy[...] and in the second circular economy action plan the ambition level was raised further." Thus, the political stream was ripe

concerning circularity, however not for the issue of textiles. This means D2 was not yet met.

Political windows

H2: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Commission takes office; or b) In case there is an EU mood regarding a problem that reaches the Commission.*

The European public mood

From 2018 onwards started by Gretha Thunberg, large protests all over the EU took place against the lack of action on climate change, called Fridays for Future (Interviewee D). In the same year the EC published its long-term vision 'A Clean Planet for all', looking at multiple pathways to reach the Paris Agreements 'well below 2 °C and 1.5 °C' (EC, 2018b). The eurobarometer of 2019 showed that 93% of the participants saw climate change as a serious problem compared to 79% in 2017 (Interviewee D). More than half of all respondents think national governments (55%) or business and industry (51%) are responsible for tackling climate change, while almost half (49%) mentioned the EU (Eurobarometer, 2019). This showed that there was some sort of public mood concerning the EU as an institute responsible for combating climate change.

During the writing process of the ECDPM Paper in 2019, workshops were held with DG ENV & DG DEVCO, in which an upcoming textile strategy plan was privately mentioned by DG ENV (Interviewee C). Interviewee F stated: "*We heard from the commission informally that most likely in the circular economy action plan there was going to be a section on textiles.*" This is an indication of receptivity for the topic. Additionally, a briefing of the EP (PE 633.143) at the beginning of 2019 stressed that addressing sustainability in the clothing industry is a key priority for the EU. Similarly, in October the Council adopted *More circularity - Transition to a sustainable society* supporting further ambitious efforts to stimulate a systemic transition to a sustainable society (mentioning textiles) (12791/19). This opened an agenda window concerning the urgency of combating climate change and hypothesis 2 was met and it ripened the political stream.

Commission turnover

In 2019 a new election period at the EC took place. However, none of the three Spitzenkandidaten Weber, Timmermans or Vestager received the strong support of a majority in the EP compared to Juncker five years earlier. Therefore, Ursula von der Leyen was presented as a candidate by the Christian Democrats. *“However, she had to receive the support of the EP, and how did she do that? By highlighting the Green Deal Platform and to include this in her political priority statement. She received the support, and from that moment [the Green Deal] became a priority. And that is very special, because it really matters when the president makes something a priority “* (Interviewee D).

Ursula von der Leyen became the commission president. On the 11th of December 2019, the EC communicated to the EP and the Council the European Green Deal (EGD). The EGD played a key role in the approval of the Von der Leyen Commission and its political agenda (Gaventa, 2019; Interviewee A, D, E). One respondent from within the EU explained: *“The Green Deal became our map and compass for everything that followed. For issues ranging from mobility, the built environment, circularity and products, you name it!”* (Interviewee D). At the beginning of 2020 in March, Ursula von der Leyen announced her agenda for Europe: *A union that strives for more in which* textiles are announced as a high impact sector to be covered in the new CEAP (2020, p. 9). This means an agenda window was opened for new commission priorities and hypothesis 2 was met.

Council conclusions

H3: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if: a) a new Council Presidency takes office; or b) one or consecutive Council Presidencies release their working program(s)*

H4: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if the European Council publishes conclusions that provide an impetus for the EU's development.*

On the 20th of June 2019, the New Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 was adopted by the European Council emphasizing on the urgency to build “a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe” (European Council, 2019, p. 1). Also council conclusions (12791/19) urgently stated: *“that closing the loop in textiles is critical, because the consumption of textiles is estimated to double by 2030, textiles have very low material recovery rates and the production of textiles has a considerable*

environmental footprint, with most material ending up in incineration or landfill” (European Council, 2019c, p.11). This means both H3 and H4 were met.

Questions by EU legislative or executive branches

H5: *An agenda window opens in the political stream if (at least) one branch of the EU’s executive or legislative asks one (other branch of the EU’s executive to address an issue.*

In 2016 the first parliamentary question directed to the EC was sent concerning textiles and the circular economy (E-008120/2016). In total eight parliamentary questions were sent to the EC concerning recycling of clothing, textile waste, the future of the textile sector and the circular economy (E-009690/2016; E-001869/2018; E-003784/2018; E-002110/2019; E-003851/2019; E-002738/2019; E-002736/2019). This shows that MEP’s were already concerned with the topic, indicating that the topic of textiles already reached lower-level agenda’s. However, these are not official calls of the EP institution requesting the EC to address a specific issue, therefore hypothesis 5 was not met.

The policy stream

D3: *The policy stream is ripe if the policy community is familiar with at least one alternative to the policy problem in question, that is either (1) technically feasible, (2) acceptable to the values of the community, or (3) anticipates future constraints and (4) are discussed by the policy community.*

At the policy level, the discussion about circularity was instigated by a report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) advocating an EU transition towards the circular economy mentioning the limits of linear consumption (2013, p. 5). Following the EMF, circularity as a policy idea for strategic innovation in the textile industry was mentioned by different international and EU-specific stakeholders (World Economic Forum, 2014; ETP Fibres Textiles Clothing, 2016; Joint Research Centre, 2016; McKinsey, 2016; Ellen McArthur Foundation, 2017; Ten Wolde & Korneeva, 2019; van Seters & Ashraf, 2019). These different groups, such as Netfas, Ecopreneur, EURATEX, Fair Trade Advocacy Office, the EEB and many more came into contact with multiple DG’s (Interviewee A, B, D, F, G). Interviewee I explained that: “[within the EC] we have been speaking about textiles as an important sector for the last few

years. [...] Before the second Circular Economy Action Plan was set-up, we knew textiles was a sector that was very much present to the stakeholders and they had been reaching out to us for a long period of time.”

Globally multiple (voluntary) agendas, coalitions, indexes, and roadmaps were initiated aiming at changing the textile industry such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and the Better Mill initiative (Klepp, 2015). At the MS level, there were policy changes across the industry driven by NGOs and multistakeholder agreements such as the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles (Duval, & Partiti, 2018) and the British Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP).

Eventually, in 2016 inspired by the SCAP the European Clothing Action Plan (ECAP) was set out by the EC to encourage industry, scientists and creatives to reinvent the design and production, rethink usage and consumption, and redefine reuse and recycling of textiles and clothing (Moorhouse & Moorhouse, 2017). In 2019 the EEA published a report *Textiles in Europe's circular economy* showing specifically how circular business models and regulation can be applied to the EU (EEA, 2019; Interviewee B). In most of the policy reports applying circular components to the textile industry, these are framed in terms of bringing harmonised solutions across the European single market as well as inspire wider sustainable action at global level (e.g. Euratex, 2020). Another frame often used is that the EU investment in a circular economy is essential to accomplish the social, environmental, and economic advantages of the 2030 Agenda.

Lastly, at the European policy level under the first CEAP in 2018 and in order to reach the SDG's the Plastics Strategy was launched lead by Frans Timmermans and Jyrki Katainen (EC, 2018a) that resulted in a directive on single-use plastics within a little more than a year ((EU) 2019/904). This was identified as a large EU success, as explained by interviewee B: “ *that was a breakthrough thing, nothing was ever done before on the EU level and there was no legislation happening in any form. I think they started with one of the hotspot sectors and that was plastic. Then the voices about textiles started to spread around by 2018-2019.* (Interviewee A, B, D, G, H). The policy community was familiar with policy alternatives that were acceptable to the values of the community, technically feasible and discussed by the community. This means that D3 was met.

Policy or political entrepreneurs

H6: *A policy entrepreneur couples the streams.*

H7: *A political entrepreneur couples the streams.*

There was no specific policy or political entrepreneurs mentioned that coupled the streams or operated as active agents beyond their job descriptions concerning textiles. This means hypotheses 6 and 7 were not met. Unfortunately, there is no information in documentation or elite interviewees on entrepreneurs. However, Frans Timmermans was mentioned by many respondents as having a key role in the Plastic Strategy as well as the Green Deal (Interviewee A, D, I). Since Timmermans activities covered other policy areas, I have decided not to identify him as a political entrepreneur.

Necessary conditions

C1: *The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe.*

C2: *A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window.*

C3: *A policy entrepreneur or political entrepreneur engages in coupling the three streams.*

To conclude, initially two streams were ripe, the problem and policy stream. Therefore, C1 was not met. Secondly, a political agenda window opened when the von der Leyen commission took office. Apart from that, hypotheses 3 and 4 were met. This shows that there were many possibilities to open agenda windows in the political stream. For that reason, C2 was met. Eventually, there were no policy or political entrepreneurs identified, as a result C3 was not met. However, the issue of textiles shifted from the governmental sub-agenda's to the EC agenda in the second CEAP. This means that while C1 and C3 were not fully met, there is a possibility in this case that an issue shifts from the governmental agenda to the political agenda, when there is enough political receptivity.

Table 5 : A multiple streams analysis of the agenda setting process in the textile sector.

Conditions	Hypotheses	Flagship initiative of the Garment Sector		Textile strategy in CEAP	
		Empirical observation	Particularity	Empirical observation	Particularity
C1: The political stream and the problem stream are ripe, or all three streams are ripe,	D1: problem stream	<p>Attention was raised; however, the EU was not held responsible for the discrepancy for <i>environment and social issues</i>.</p> <p>The textile industry was interpreted as problematic in <i>economic, social and environmental terms</i>.</p>	<p>The stream was not ripe initially.</p> <p>Ripened by the opening of an agenda window in the problem stream</p>	<p>Climate change related problems were gaining attention at the EC and the EEA report <i>highlighted the environmental impact of textile consumption in the EU</i>.</p>	<p>The problem stream was ripe in 2014.</p> <p>However, textiles were not taken up in the first CEAP.</p>
	D2: political stream	<p>Rana Plaza required an EU response.</p> <p>However, the EC's and EP's word usage was initially <i>not favorable to an all-encompassing EU strategy for a socially responsible textile value chain</i>.</p>	<p>The stream was not ripe initially.</p>	<p>Circularity and climate change related problems received attention of lower level agendas of the EP.</p>	<p>The stream was not ripe initially.</p> <p>Ripened by the opening of an agenda window in the political stream & problem stream</p>

	D3: policy stream	<p>The policy community was familiar with at least one alternative to <i>the human rights abuses in the garment supply chain that were discussed by the community.</i></p> <p>Specifically, the recommendations made by the EEAS.</p>	The policy stream was ripe.	<p>Multiple policy alternatives for the textile sector were discussed by the policy community, especially <i>the circular economy related policy options for the textile sector were well-presented and lastly the EU policy solutions for a sector comparable to the textile industry (Plastics) was perceived as successful.</i></p>	The policy stream was ripe.
C2: A change in the problem or political stream opens an agenda window	H1: An agenda window opens in the problem stream	<p>The focusing event Rana Plaza was relevant to the textile policy field and raised attention to <i>the social issues in the garment supply chain.</i></p>	The problem stream ripened.	<p>A relevant indicator, Goal 12 of the SDGs deteriorated.</p> <p>A monitoring study of the first CEAP was published <i>indicating a success and future focusing sectors such as the textile sector, as well as a reflection paper.</i></p>	<p>An agenda window was opened by the publication of an EC reflection paper concerning the sustainable 2030 agenda and the success of the CEAP paving the way for new focusing sectors.</p>

	<p>H2: An agenda window opens in the political stream</p>	<p>A new Commission took office assigning Neven Mimica to the <i>setting-up of the Flagship initiative</i>.</p>	<p>However, a political agenda window was not opened.</p>	<p>The EU public mood <i>shifted towards the combating of climate change as a responsibility for the EU</i>.</p> <p>Commission turnover and the failure of the Spitzenkandidaten process leading to von der Leyen's presidency paved the way for the Green Deal</p>	<p>An agenda window opened for new EC priorities that tilted towards the Green Deal.</p>
	<p>H3: An agenda window opens in the political stream if the European Council publishes acts.</p>	<p>The Council presented a set of conclusions <i>supporting the multistakeholder efforts as a response to Rana Plaza and stimulated the EC</i>.</p>	<p>However, a political agenda window was not opened.</p>	<p>Even before a new commission was installed council conclusions were published endorsing <i>closing the loop for textiles</i>.</p>	<p>An agenda window was opened.</p>
	<p>H4: An agenda window opens in the political stream if (at least) asks one (other branch of the EU's executive) to address an issue.</p>	<p>The EP indicated the importance of the EC to act, <i>in the form of resolutions, questions and own-initiative reports concerning human rights in the garment sector</i>.</p>	<p>However, a political agenda window was not opened.</p>	<p>There was no official call of the EP for the EC to address the issue of textiles concerning circularity.</p>	<p>A political agenda window was not opened</p>

<p>C3: A policy and/or political entrepreneur try to couple the streams</p>	<p>H5: The policy entrepreneurs couples the streams</p> <p>H6: The political entrepreneur couples the streams</p>	<p>Non-identifiable</p> <p>Non-identifiable</p>	<p>No coupling took place</p>	<p>Non-identifiable</p>	<p>Given the problem agreement concerning economic and environmental related textile problems, broad political support, the availability of circular policy alternatives, agenda change did not require coupling.</p>
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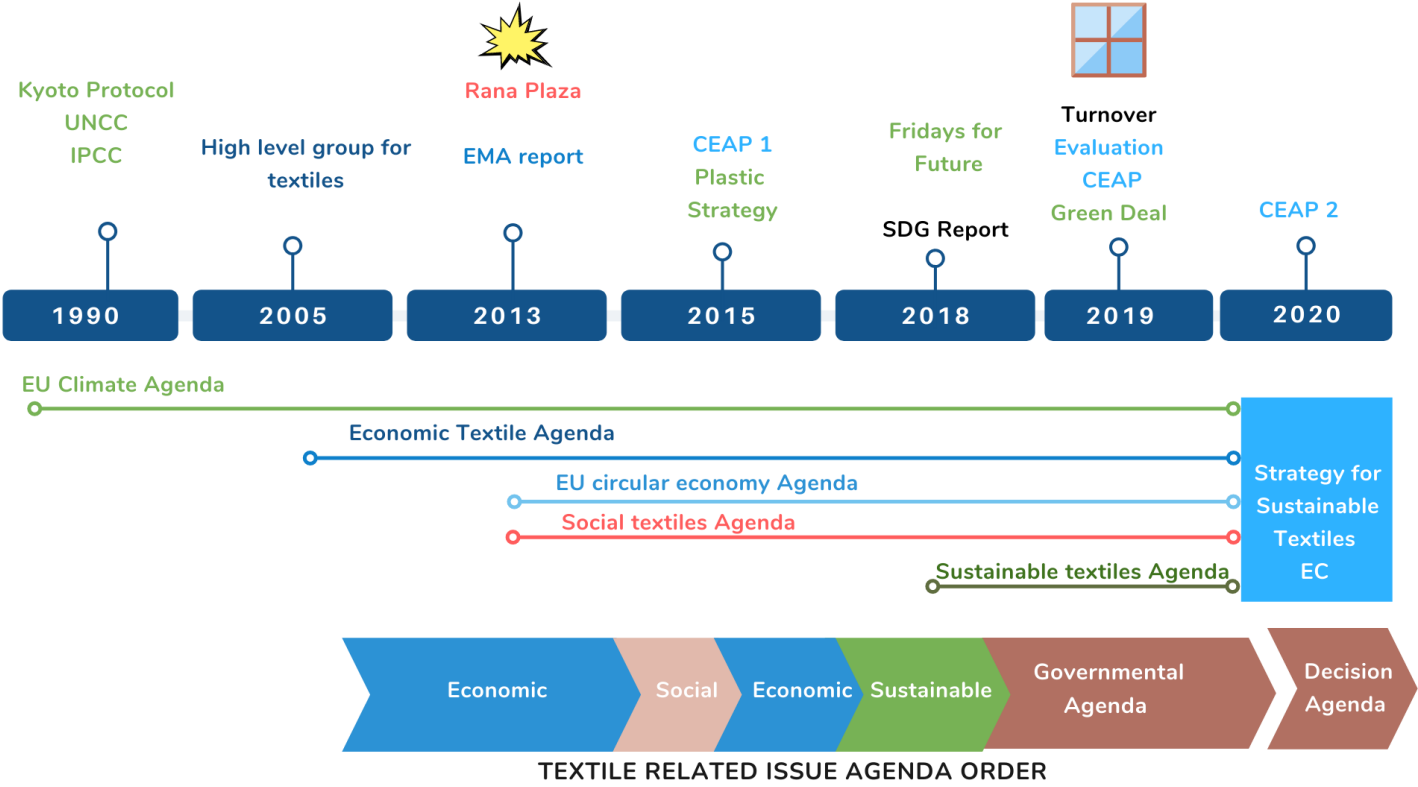
Chapter 6 Conclusion

This thesis first and foremost aimed to understand how the issue of sustainable textiles entered the EC's governmental and decision agenda. In doing so the thesis also contributed to the scarce public policy-related literature about the EU textile and clothing sector. More importantly, the analysis looked at the garment sector initiative and the second circular economy action plan. Theoretically, this thesis aimed to strengthen the agenda-setting research in the European Union in two ways: First, it adjusted the Multiple streams framework (MSF) to agenda-setting in the EU context. Secondly, the adjusted framework was empirically tested to evaluate whether the modifications sufficiently managed to explain the pathway towards textiles appearing on the EU agenda in the Textile Strategy.

A variety of elements were relevant to answer this question (summarized in figure 8). I have attempted to untangle these different elements. The decision to mention textiles in the publication of the Circular Economy Action Plan and to work towards an EU Textile Strategy was made by the European Commission. However, this outcome on the 11th of March 2020 was taken after years in which different environmental and economic policies were installed, discussions were held in the European Commission, European Parliament, The Council, in which some punctuating events, one agenda window appeared, and a policy community managed to frame the issue in line with the EU's vision for the future.

I will first discuss the different processes and events that explain how the issue of sustainable textiles was adopted on the EC agenda. Secondly, I will look at which specific actors influenced this agenda-setting process. Thirdly, I will evaluate the use and applicability of the adjusted MSF in this case study. As the EU sustainable textile strategy is currently in the public consultation phase and the final objective announcements are planned for the end of 2021, these are preliminary findings. There is still a possibility that textiles in the months to come gets a less prominent place on the EC agenda.

Figure 8: A overview of the analysis of the agenda-setting process towards the Strategy for Sustainable Textiles



6.1 Processes: fertile ground and accelerating events

EU long-term agenda streams

First of all, an important observation is that the adoption of the EU textiles strategy was the result of a merger of two long-term agenda streams that are dominant in European union. The climate agenda of the EU has a long history which goes back to the early 1980s. This agenda was expanded over the years due to international as well as public pressures. Hence, this explains that within the EC there is a long tradition of receptivity and execution of climate-related policy frameworks. I would call this a separate EC agenda stream that has been growing over the years, adding more issues and sectors to its framework. Because textiles were connected to these targets for a very long time, in the long run it did provide fertile ground.

Secondly, the economic agenda has existed since the creation of the EU. The union started as an economic community responsible for the wellbeing and interests of citizens. The idea was to ensure that the European economy was stable and competitive compared to other countries. This agenda was connected to the textile industry in the early 2000s when the social and economic effects of free trade and globalization on the European society started to show, and the High-Level Group for textiles was set up. Therefore, the economic problems of the textile industry received European Commission attention and even made it to the decision agenda at a relatively early stage. However, initially attention was only given to economic and social issues, and this did not also pertain to the sustainability element of textiles

Cumulative success & convergence

The textile strategy was not made in isolation, but was a result of cumulation of a series of sub-agendas. From 2008 onwards, there was an increased focus on sustainable development and resource efficiency within the EC. This resulted in the publication of multiple action plans, frameworks and directives. These targeted the production and consumption of goods as well as their recycling, laying the groundwork for circular policies. Both the EU climate and economic agenda converged into a combined agenda focusing on circularity in 2013. The circular economy became the dominant frame in the EC political discourse, as it provided the policymakers with a framework that combined environmental targets and the EU paradigm of economic growth.

Throughout this research it became clear that the EU agenda revolves around the process of perceived success from the evaluation of programs, plans and strategies leading to expansion in other policy areas. The First Circular Economy Action Plan was drafted during a period of economic recession, and it was the first time the EU committed itself to a circular approach. With this in mind, the CEAP targeted the most important high impact sectors and focused on economic growth and job creation as some sort of trial. The first CEAP was perceived as a great success within the EC, since it delivered its 54 targets and delivered a groundbreaking directive on single use plastics. This provided a momentum for more cumulative expansion. Therefore, in the second round of the CEAP there was familiarity with the circular economy, paving the way for more ambitious targets including textiles. These two agenda streams provided the fertile ground for sustainable textile attention, however, a series of events have accelerated the place of textiles in the EC agenda.

Punctuating events & one agenda window

The analysis looked at a long period of time, therefore, there were multiple events accelerating the place of textiles in the line of EC agenda topics. I made the decision to call these punctuating events instead of agenda windows in this conclusion as a part of the evaluation of the MSF. This is because there was only one event, that was an agenda window in Kingdon's sense. In which pet solutions were pushed by stakeholders, which was the Commission turnover in 2019. Punctuation means interrupting or causing something to happen in line with the earlier theory of Baumgartner & Jones. Such punctuations have accelerated the speed of the topic of textiles reaching the EC agenda or getting to the front of the issues lined up for decision making. However, such punctuations did not open agenda windows.

The year 2013, was very crucial for the EU textile strategy. In this year, the notion of an EU circular economy was introduced by the Ellen McArthur foundation. In the same year, the issue of textiles returned on the higher agenda of multiple EU institutions because of the **Rana Plaza incident**. While this textile tragedy did not result in a comprehensive EU garment sector policy, the aftermath made textiles into a government topic hard to ignore. From that moment textiles entered the waiting line for EC agenda attention.

Despite the abundant information about the issues in the textile industry highlighted in many reports over the years, the problem needed a boost to be picked up politically. This happened in 2018 when the **Fridays for Future** climate protests

increased the urgency for EU supranational action and the SDG evaluation showed a very low score concerning goal 12 concerning sustainable production and consumption. Shortly after, in 2019, an evaluation report of the first circular action plan was published. The CEAP was perceived as a success within the EC, and signalled the textile industry to be targeted as an high-impact sector.

The final driving event was the European Commission turnover and the announcement of the European Green Deal. This plan served as the agenda window for more ambitious climate goals and as a compass for further EU policy plans. Eventually the earlier recognized economic issue of the textile sector converged with the climate issue serving as an opportunity for the EU to boost its sustainable competitiveness, creating jobs for a weakening EU sector and setting a worldwide textile example.

6.2 Actors: active advocacy

There were many actors that influenced the agenda setting process. However, from the data I could not ascertain decisive actors comparable to the earlier described policy or political entrepreneurs.

For the garment sector initiative, the EC blocked the issue of textiles entering the decision agenda, even though the Commissioner for Trade, the Council, Member States, and stakeholders were in favor of the multi-stakeholder platform. The same goes for the European Parliament that later on called for EU-wide legislation concerning the garment sector. The adoption of the issue of textiles on the decision agenda depended on the views of the lead DGs about an appropriate response to Rana Plaza.

For the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Council's agenda and EP questions indicated the need for a green transition and concluded that textiles should be taken up in the next circular plan. I would say that Frans Timmermans could be considered a political entrepreneur for the Green Deal and who paved the way for textiles on the EC agenda with the Plastics Strategy. However, I have too little information of the stakeholders involved to confirm or disconfirm the actual power of the Council, the EP, the DGs, and Timmermans in this process.

It appears that **advocacy groups** had a significant role in the process. When the economic textile problems were picked up by the EC in 2004 apart from Euratex, other textile associations were not organized to advocate for environmental and social aspects. This was because a large part of the sector had disappeared from the EU. As a result, the climate and social problems received little to no attention on the EU agenda. However, after Rana Plaza, the social issues concerning the industry influenced the policy community, setting into motion a bigger advocacy movement questioning more aspects of the industry. This punctuating event set in motion the establishment of textile or fashion specific groups or encouraged existing organizations to focus on textiles. These groups were smart enough to frame the circular economy as a solution to the textile issues and advocated these solutions directly at the EC. Apart from that the European Circular Economy Stakeholder platform also signalled the importance of textiles in 2019. This was confirmed by DG ENV as well as the stakeholder groups. This made the step towards the inclusion of textiles in the already known circular policy framework easier.

6.3 Discussion: the usefulness of Kingdon's theory

The use of the adjusted MSF as a theoretical lense in the analysis of the textile case was in some aspects very useful. The established hypotheses and the operationalization provided clear foci when collecting and investigating the great amount of chaotic data. The use of the term **agenda windows** allowed me to identify two interdependent agenda processes (the garment initiative reaching the governmental agenda and the textile strategy as an example of reaching the decision agenda). Textile industry related issues are multidimensional and cut across different policy areas, such as climate, economic and social policy. This means that the European policy approach and the agenda are affected by institutional complexity.

In particular, **spillover processes** mattered in the textile context. For example it is likely that the window opening for the Green Deal affected the window to open for textiles within the climate agenda during commission turnover. Apart from that, the decision to work on a plastics strategy and its perceived success served as a precedent for the issue of textiles to be addressed in the circular economy policy arena. However, I was not close enough to the internal EU processes to distinguish whether these would be exogenous or endogenous spillovers guided by policy or political entrepreneurs.

Also, Kingdon's concept of **softening up** could be perceived in the policy stream. Given that the policy stream changes slowly because ideas require introduction and the policy community needs time to become familiar and accept ideas. This happened because of the idea that targeting the climate related issues of textiles is necessary in achieving the goals of 2030. This idea had been pushed since 2014 and was even more emphasized in 2019 by advocacy groups.

However, there were also aspects that were difficult to validate. The attempt was to step away from using the MSF framework as a heuristic tool (in line with Zahariadis, 2003 & Herweg, 2015). It appears that even when you transform the theory to the context, some critiques on its core cannot be circumvented. To start, the independence and different workings of the three streams is at the centre of the adjusted MSF model, however, they remain hard to distinguish in practice. The policy and problem stream appear related and the political and policy stream as well. In some cases policy solutions and problems were mentioned in the same policy paper. However, this was only the second application of this theoretical lens to an EU case, therefore I would advise more application to different EU cases.

Lastly, I could not identify policy or political entrepreneurs for both cases, and yet textiles appeared on the agenda. Therefore, I am not certain that the coupling of the streams by policy entrepreneurs is a necessary condition. It seems that when the streams are ripe, agenda windows occur, and multiple institutions, actors and stakeholders signal an issue, it is likely to appear on the EC agenda.

When looking at the drafted hypotheses, I would devote more attention to the difference between the ripening of streams and the opening of an agenda window. It appears that the necessary conditions 1 and 2 are sometimes contradictory. The adjusted framework assumed that the likelihood of agenda change increased if the problem and political stream or all three streams are ripe. However, for both cases it appeared that the three streams initially were not ripe and had to be ripened by such windows. Since there can be multiple problems and political windows, which one is the actual agenda window? I made the decision that the problem window occurring because of Rana Plaza was decisive in the textile agenda and that for textiles appearing on the CEAP Commission turnover was decisive. However, in both cases there were (9) other events which could be interpreted in the framework as window openers. Therefore, I called these punctuating events and would advise to add these to the framework.

Apart from that, I think more attention to the duration of agenda windows in further research is needed. According to Kingdon these windows close quickly, however, in the garment sector the discussions following Rana plaza between different EU institutions took multiple years. It is not yet clear to me how to appropriately incorporate this into the hypotheses, but I think a statement in the form of a definition is not enough. Additionally, I would leave out hypothesis 3 and 4 focusing on the council presidency and working programs. I think I would add these to the political stream showing that there is political receptivity for an issue. However, I do not believe those to open agenda windows. I think that hypothesis 5 already covers the power of the Council in influencing the EC agenda.

6.4 Discussion: validity and methodology

It's important to reflect on the effect of the research design and methodological choices on the validity of the findings. If I would get the chance to repeat this research to increase the validity of the findings, I would have selected a case in which the agenda-setting or policy-making process is finalized. Considering the textile strategy evolved from the public consultation phase, to the stakeholder consultation phase during my thesis research and that the commission adoption is planned for October 2021. Therefore, the agenda-setting process and decision-making process were often mixed-up by respondents in the interviews. However, this would also increase the chance of the replacement of key actors and the remembrance of the course of events.

In addition, the number of respondents that were staff of the EC was limited, and I would increase these. The respondent pool consisted of more external than internal stakeholders, therefore I did not have sufficient information to give insights on the EC's internal process which was my initial aim. However, this was also connected to the willingness of EU officials to participate in this research.

Lastly, I would advise myself and others to execute such a research design for a Phd and not a master's thesis to give myself more time. Agenda-setting is often a gradual process and it is hard to pinpoint specific actors or events. It requires a thorough qualitative research approach including building relationships with respondents to understand the subtle details.

As regards methodology, due to the Covid pandemic I was not able to meet my respondents in person or to visit Brussels. As a consequence, the online interviews

felt shallow and only scratched the surface of agenda-setting processes. There are probably many more explanations for textiles appearing on the EC, of which some will only be known by political elites. I think it would have been helpful to engage in an EC internship or arrange meetings in person with EU officials to get richer data. Secondly, I would plan repeated interviews and more pilot interviews. Understanding the MSF framework and the case of textiles takes time, therefore, it feels as if I knew what to ask in the interviews when almost all of these were completed.

Epilogue

I started this thesis because of frustration with the prevalent human rights abuses and environmental degradation in the textile and clothing sector. The textile industry rewards economic growth and profit above all else. These injustices appear endemic because the textile supply chain is complex, fragmented, and opaque. Some people have great power in changing this sector, while others have very little. Too much is expected from consumers, and too little happens at the governmental level in terms of legislation and policy.

Luckily, in 2020 the EC published the Strategy for Sustainable Textiles. After this thesis, I can say that following discussion and advocacy sustainable textiles reached the EC agenda. It appears that sustainable textiles are an idea whose time has come at the EU level. This is because it is a convenient sector fitting to the circular economy frame and the SDGs. As we speak, the strategy is in the preparation phase, and its EC adoption is planned for the third quarter of 2021.

Now that it is part of the EC governmental agenda, I hope we will get EU standards for sustainable textiles soon. Initially, I was motivated by this concept of the Brussels Effect and a race to the top for sustainable textiles. Such an effect occurs when the EU imposes its own (stricter) standards upon one or more of its trade partners through the use of market access. It is uncertain what the strategy will bring about. However, I do hope that in a few years, when the textile strategy is laid out, the EU textile legislation sets an example for the rest of the world.

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Annex II

Topic list interviews

Profession and organization specific

- What does your work as a [e.g. sustainability officer] look like?
- Have you worked for other organizations in the field and since when?
- How long have you been working at [department]?

Textile Sector

- Was there a lot of knowledge on the problems of the textile sector in [organization or department]? Since when?
- What is the general importance of the sustainable textile strategy?
- Is this different from the EC agenda or EU agenda?
- Why is it important that the EU tackles such an issue?

Textile Strategy specific

- For what reasons do you think sustainable textiles were mentioned in the second circular economy strategy?
- Why did it receive the attention of EC policy makers?
- Why was it not on the first circular economy action plan?
- In your point of view, are there specific events or actors that increased the urgency of the topic of sustainable textiles? Is this driven by specific actors?
- Do you think there is a reason it is called the sustainable textile strategy or just textile strategy not mentioning the term fair?

Flagship Initiative specific

- There have been earlier attempts by the European Commission trying to start the EU flagship initiative on the garment sector in 2014. Why do you think these failed?
- Were there other topics more urgent on the EU agenda?
- What do you think makes an issue more important than others?
- What do you think determines whether an issue enters the EC agenda?
- Was there a relation between this initiative and the sustainable textile strategy?

Involvement in strategy formulation

- Was [e.g organization] involved in setting up the strategy?
- In which ways do you offer expertise to the EU? How often do you offer advice voluntarily?
- Were there a lot of recommendations and policy papers published focussing on the issues related to the textile strategy to your knowledge?
- In what ways are you in contact with EU institutions? How does this work? Which institutions in particular?
- Specifically, are you in contact with the European Commission? How do you influence them when you publish a position paper or a manifesto?

Tips & Recommendations

- Would you recommend parties, stakeholders or reports that are useful further in this research concerning textiles? Or speak further in this process?

Annex III

Coding tree

